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THE RED WHISKERS AND WIG WERE QUICKLY REMOVED AND THE HANDSOME FACE OF PERCY GRAY WAS REVEALED TO THE
ASTONISHED LAWYER.

Invisible Ivan, THE WIZARD DETECTIVE;

OR,

The Secrets of the Cells.

A Story of the Mysterious Phases of
New York City Life.

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

ACCUSED BY DYING LIPS.

"FOR the love of God, spare me!"

The cry was in a woman's voice, and rung out appealingly, almost in a shriek for mercy, just as a clock in a church steeple near by began to toll forth the hour of twelve at night.

A dark, blustering night, with the icy wind piercing to the marrow all who were not warmly clad, few wayfarers were abroad, and only the one addressed heard the piteous appeal for mercy, only the one who uttered it heard the savage response:

"No, you shall die!"

A woman was held in the strong grasp of a man, the hand of the latter arose and fell quickly, a wild cry followed, as though the heart had been riven with steel, a ringing of metal upon the stone pavement, and while one sunk down in a heap the other bounded away and disappeared around the next corner.

A moment after and a form appears, walking rapidly, halts suddenly, springs forward and grasps in his arms the one who lies in a heap upon the cold pavement.

"My God! she is dying! Ah! here is help.

"Ho, officer, I found this woman dying here, and her dress is stained with blood.

"Poor thing, she is doubtless a suicide."

The guardian of the city stepped quickly forward, stooped, picked up a red-stained dagger from the ground, and gave a call for aid, while he took the woman in his arms and bore her to the nearest gas-lamp.

"She is dying, sir, and she is either a suicide, or has been murdered, and this knife has done the deed.

"Who are you, sir?"

"My name is Percy Gray, officer; but here comes help, and I will leave you."

"No, sir, you must remain and go with me—here comes my sergeant," and just then a tall man in the uniform of a police officer came up, followed by two others who had heard the earnest call for help.

"Well, Sheehan, what is it?"

"This woman was found here, sergeant, by that gentleman, and she is dying from a wound inflicted with this knife, but who held it I do not know," was the rapid explanation.

The police sergeant took the knife and thrust it into his pocket, then he bent over the form that the officer supported in his arms, as he knelt upon the pavement.

"What a beautiful face! and she is a lady; but see, she opens her eyes, and may be able to tell whether it is suicide or murder.

"Speak, lady, who are you?" said the sergeant, in a kindly tone.

She turned her eyes full upon him and said faintly:

"It matters not, now."

"Did you take your own life?"

"Oh, no!"

"Who did?"

She was silent, and the sergeant said:

"It is my duty to tell you that you are dying, and you must speak, that your murderer does not escape.

"Who was your slayer?"

The beautiful eyes again opened, and they moved slowly from face to face until they rested upon the one who had first reached her side after she fell.

She shuddered, and said distinctly, as she raised her hand and pointed:

"That man killed me. May God forgive him, for I never can!"

"Good God! do you accuse me, woman?" cried the stranger, starting back, while the hands of two policemen fell heavily upon him.

She made no reply, a quiver went through her slender form, and the head, with its masses of red-gold hair, fell back over the officer's arm.

"She is dead—I arrest you, sir, as her murderer!" and the sergeant arose from his kneeling posture and laid his hand upon the shoulder of the accused.

"Officer, God knows I am not guilty of this brutal crime.

"I have been falsely accused by dying lips, for never in my life before did I see that woman."

"You must prove that, sir, at your trial; but now you must go with me, for a crueler deed was never done than to kill that beautiful young girl."

"Hold out your hands, sir!"

Mechanically the man obeyed, and he started when the click of the spring told him he was in irons.

With bowed head he walked away with the sergeant, while the policemen bore the dead form to the nearest station, and the red stain, already frozen by the chilling blasts, alone marked the spot where a tragedy had been committed, and in peaceful ignorance the dwellers in the handsome houses surrounding the fashionable up-town square in the great city of New York, slumbered on, for few indeed know what deeds are done in our very midst,

"When night's black veil o'er the city is thrown."

CHAPTER II.

THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL.

In a cell of the city prison a man is pacing to and fro with the quick, nervous step of a tiger in his narrow cage.

But the step alone shows indication of nervousness, for his face is as calm as though chiseled out of marble, and as colorless.

It is a face to see and not forget, one that forces remembrance on you, once the dark eyes have met your own.

Bronzed by exposure, though now pale, the complexion is perfect, the eyes are large, strangely brilliant and expressive, and eyes in which hatred, love or anger can be revealed with an intensity that is dangerous for the possessor.

The lips are full, the mouth as full of expression as the eyes, the teeth white as milk and as perfect, the other features womanly in their beauty, and the hair dark, worn rather long and waving.

The form of the man is rather under the medium height, slender, graceful, but with every indication of strength, activity and endurance.

He is dressed neatly, in a dark Prince Albert coat, dark-gray pants, wears a black slouch hat upon his head, and his hands and feet are small and shapely.

A fine diamond sparkles in his black silk scarf, a heavy seal ring with a strange device is on the little finger of his left hand, solid gold sleeve-buttons with a diamond set in the center are in his cuffs, and now and then in his walk he takes from his vest-pocket a handsome watch attached by a slender gold chain and glances at the time of night, for dawn is near at hand.

Over a chair in his cell hangs a cloak, such as army officers wear, and upon it and a pair of heavy gloves are blood-stains.

To and fro, to and fro he walks, until the dawn without steals in and dims the luster of the corridor-lamp, shining through the iron grating of the cell-door.

Then he pauses, sits down, leans his arm upon the rude table, and resting his head upon it, so remains until an attendant enters with breakfast.

It is not a tempting repast, it is not a bad one, but the young man, for he is young, perhaps twenty, maybe twenty-five, drinks a cup of coffee and motions the rest away.

Inured to strange scenes, and stranger people, the attendant seems surprised at the bearing and appearance of the cell's occupant, for he has heard why he is there, in that desolate, stone-walled place, and as he goes out mutters to himself:

"He does not look it; but yet he did it, and he'll hang, that is certain."

Soon after two police-officers entered, and one said sternly, yet with a certain politeness that the appearance of the prisoner commanded:

"You are wanted for trial, sir."

"I am ready; am I to be handcuffed?" was the calm reply.

"Yes, sir; it must be done."

Without a word he held forth his hands, the irons were snapped upon the wrists, and the prisoner was driven rapidly to court, through the streets, and to his ears came the voices of the newsboys crying out as a bait to sell their papers the account of his crime.

Before the magistrate he is taken, and he pleads:

"Not guilty!"

"You heard the dying confession of the woman, sergeant?" asked the court.

"I did, sir, and she accused this man of murdering her, and I picked up this dagger on the spot; it bears the initials P. G. engraven on the hilt, and Percy Gray is the prisoner's name, sir," was the response.

The prisoner smiled a strange smile, in which there was not the shadow of mirth, and asked:

"If it please the court, may I see the dead lady?"

A strange request indeed for a murderer to make; but it was granted, and to the morgue he was driven.

He entered without a tremor, and beheld the body of the woman, whom the night before he had seen in life.

She was very beautiful, even in death; her red-gold hair hung in waving masses about her, her form was graceful, her face girlish, her attire elegant and in perfect taste.

"Who is she?" asked the keeper of the morgue, of the man her dying lips had accused of being

her murderer, as he stood gazing down upon the young, innocent face, so full of beauty, without the quiver of a muscle.

"I do not know, for I never saw her in my life before last night," was the firm reply.

"Not a scrap of paper was found upon her, only her pocketbook containing sixty dollars, a pair of diamond earrings, gold bracelets, and a ring with a strange device, for it was a solid gold band with an onyx set, and in the latter, uniquely formed of pearls, a skull and cross-bones."

"A strange ring indeed, sir; was there any engraving within?" said the prisoner, and the eyes of all were upon him.

"You should know," was the significant reply.

"I do not know, though, so tell me."

"The initials 'P. G.' were engraven in the ring."

"Strange, for those are the initials of my name."

"If you do not make known her name and address, if no friends claim the body it must go to the Potter's Field," said the sergeant, who had accompanied the prisoner.

"No, that must not be; here, sergeant, is money to defray her burial expenses, and to purchase a lot for her in Greenwood."

"Let her have the best, poor girl; but if her friends claim her, return me the money," and he gave to the officer a roll of bills.

Again he turned to the corpse, and said:

"Poor unknown! may she rest in peace."

"I am ready to go now, sergeant."

He was led away, back to his carriage, and the charge being: "Guilty of murder in the first degree," he was sent to a cell in the Tombs to await his trial, which, with the testimony of dying lips that he was guilty, could but end one way.

In a gloomy cell of the prison he was placed, the iron door clanged behind him, and the world with its brightness seemed shut out forever, the valley of the shadow of death appeared before him as the path his feet must tread.

His cloak and hat were cast aside, his silk scarf and collar were opened, as though they choked him, and he threw himself upon the rude cot and bent his gaze upon the ceiling.

Suddenly he started, rubbed his eyes, lay back again and still gazed upward.

Was it an optical delusion, or was there really handwriting on the wall?

In the dim light that pervaded his cell he certainly saw some words traced there at the top of the wall.

He moved, and they faded away; he took his former position, and they were there.

Seen only from his recumbent attitude upon his cot, with his head upon the pillow, they were meant only for the eyes of one, who like him, was doomed to occupy that gloomy cell, lie upon that rude bed.

As the sun went on its way, and the light from its declining rays shone into his cell through the narrow aperture that served as a window, the tracery on the wall became more distinct, and he read the words.

They were painted, rather than written, in long lines near the top of the wall, and read:

"To-morrow I am to die upon the gallows, for a crime of which I am innocent, as God is my Judge!"

"Circumstantial evidence condemns me, and my curs-a rest upon the guilty one for whose crime I hang!"

"If he who occupies this cell when I am dead if he, too is not under death sentence, let him bring my murderer, the guilty one to justice, and clear my name of infamy, and, as I am innocent, my dying prayer will be to Heaven to bless him here and hereafter!"

"Hanged September —, 18—."

Over and over again did the occupant of the cell read that "Handwriting on the Wall," that told of a man falsely accused, a legal crime committed.

Then he arose and began that nervous, tiger-like pace to and fro, to and fro.

"Must I stay here to die, too?" he muttered.

"Stay to be hanged and fill a grave of infamy?"

"No! iron bars and stone walls shall not hold me," and stepping to the door, he called out:

"Keeper!"

"Well, what is wanted?" said the man on duty in the dismal corridor.

"I said to-day I cared not for a lawyer; but I have changed my mind."

"Shall I send you a lawyer?"

"No; but let me know if there is an attorney in the city by the name of Bonnell Rogers?"

"There is, sir, a bright young fellow, too, and I know him. He resembles you greatly, and is doubtless a relative," said the keeper.

"Send him word to come here this evening, if possible, and see me."

"I'll be off duty soon, and will go myself."

"Thank you," and the prisoner resumed his pacing to and fro.

Again he stopped near the narrow window, and took from within his sleeve, above the cuff, a small pistol of the Derringer pattern.

He examined it carefully, with an emotionless face, and muttered:

"Your hiding-place, my pretty toy, escaped even the eyes of the hawks of the law, and you will serve me well in need."

* Many of the police officers and detectives whose names are used in this story are real officers of to day in New York city life.—THE AUTHOR.

From an inner pocket in his cloak he took a large silk scarf, and from his coat a cambric handkerchief.

Then he sat down to wait, while the sunlight faded from the room and the gloom deepened within.

Presently steps were heard without, his door swung open, and a gentleman entered, while the keeper said:

"Your lawyer to see you."

"Mr. Bonnell Rogers, sir?" he asked, in a courtly way.

"Yes, sir; you sent for me, I believe?"

"I did; be seated, please, there, until I can get myself under control."

Yet he did not seem nervous, the lawyer thought, as he placed a chair so that the visitor could not see his face.

To and fro he walked again, a dead silence in the cell, as the lawyer spoke not.

Then suddenly he halted directly behind the attorney, quick as a flash the silk scarf was twisted about his throat until outcry was impossible, and the pistol was forced hard against the temple of the struggling, choking man.

With a grip like death he held the twisted scarf, until the arms sunk down, the limp form fell in a heap upon the stone floor.

Instantly it was turned over, the handkerchief was thrust into the mouth as a gag, the scarf bound it tightly there, and the form was raised to the cot.

Quickly a part of the clothing of the lawyer, who was about the same size of the prisoner, was taken off, and an exchange was made with a dexterity that was marvelous.

The handkerchief of the lawyer served to bind his arms behind him, and, as he lay upon the cot the cloak was placed over him, so that he appeared to have thrown himself down to rest.

The eyeglasses of the attorney next adorned the nose of the daring prisoner, his long hair was curled upon his head and covered with the shining beaver, and the heavy fur overcoat drawn on.

"I am ready, and he is fast recovering consciousness," he said, coolly.

Then he called out, in a voice assumed to resemble that of the lawyer:

"Keeper, I am ready to go."

It was not the keeper who said he had known the lawyer that opened the door, and had it been, he would hardly have recognized the cheat.

Out into the corridor he stepped briskly, the door clanged behind him, and, in the gloom of approaching nightfall, he hastened on his way.

Out of the corridor, unquestioned, unsuspected, he wended his way; out into the broad hallway, the open air, the street, and, springing upon a passing car, he was whirled away to freedom, while behind him the cheat was discovered, the alarm was given, and the keen-scented hounds of the law went flying through the city upon the trail of the fugitive.

CHAPTER III. THE REWARD.

"Is Mr. Rogers in?"

So asked a young man with a dark, handsome face, at the door of a brown-stone dwelling on a fashionable avenue in New York city.

"Yes; but he is not well, and will see no visitors," was the answer.

"Give him my card, for he will see me," was the response, and the servant glancing at the name thereon read:

"JAMES GORDON."

"Chief of Special Detective League."

"Walk in, sir," said the girl, impressed with the visitor's importance at once.

A moment after and Chief Gordon was shown into the library where sat, before a cheerful grate-fire, the attorney, Bonnell Rogers, the victim of the man who had lain on his cot in his cell and read the writing on the wall.

The lawyer was pale and his throat was red and swollen, while his voice was husky as he bade his visitor be seated.

"You have heard of my unfortunate mishap, Chief Gordon?" he said.

"Yes, sir, two hours ago; and I have come to get the full particulars from you," was the answer.

"They are easily given, and then the affair ends in mystery."

"One of the prison guard came to my office and told me that a young man, accused of murder, desired to retain me as his attorney."

"I had read the affair in the morning and afternoon papers, and had taken a deep interest in it, as neither the woman nor her murderer appeared to be known to any one."

"So I went to the prison at once, as night was coming on, and was shown to his cell."

* Captain James Gordon is well known to me, and it was through his splendid detective work some years ago that the great "Hornet Expedition to Cuba" was foiled, in which I twenty-five brother officers and two hundred and fifty men were tied for "piracy on the high seas." Spain and the United States not acknowledging our title of "Cuban Patriots," Captain Gordon very nearly lost his life at the "yard-arm" then, and though I deeply regretted his action, I could not but admire his skill and pluck as a detective.—PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

"He received me in a courtly way, bade me be seated until he mastered his nerves, placed the chair for me himself, and was as cool as I was, though I could not distinctly see his face."

"Suddenly I felt a grip like steel upon my throat, a silk handkerchief was twisted about my neck, and I had not the power to hurl off my assailant, and very quickly was choked into unconsciousness."

"When I recovered my senses, my head was splitting, my brain whirling, and I was gagged and bound."

"After several efforts I managed to get to the door and attract the attention of the guard by kicking upon it, and I was released, told my story and the alarm was given."

"I found he had taken my clothing, but left very considerably the contents of my pockets, money, watch and all."

"My eye-glasses, beaver hat and overcoat were gone, while I was left his suit, cloak and hat."

"He held a small pistol to my temple to force me to be quiet, but I was powerless in his strong grasp and under the choking he gave me."

"Here are his clothes that I wore home, and I am ill from the effects of the ordeal through which I passed, and am determined to leave nothing undone to capture the daring murderer, for murderer he certainly is, by the dying confession of that poor girl."

"There seems no doubt of that, Mr. Rogers; but can you tell me anything about the man?"

"Not a word."

"He seemed to know you, from his asking for you."

"Yes, but I do not remember even his name, though the keeper told me there was a striking resemblance between us, even to size, though he wore his hair long."

"He gave no address at head-quarters when questioned."

"No, nor was aught found upon the murdered girl to identify her, chief."

"He visited the morgue, viewed her body, gave the police sergeant money, quite a large sum, to buy her a lot in Greenwood and pay funeral expenses with, and is certainly a remarkable man."

"He is a most mysterious person, chief, and must be taken, and if so, I'll defend him in spite of the certainty that he will hang, from sheer admiration of his pluck."

"He must be taken, sir."

"Yes, chief, and you may offer as a reward from me five thousand dollars for his apprehension."

"You are generous, Mr. Rogers."

"I do it in justice to myself, Gordon, for there are those who will think I connived at his escape."

"None that know you, sir."

"Well, I make the reward five thousand dollars, and I only wish I could be district attorney to prosecute and hang him; but if he is captured I'll defend him, as I said, and stick to him until he ascends the steps of the gallows."

The chief smiled and said:

"I think you'll have to make your words good, Mr. Rogers, for so large a reward will certainly capture him."

"I hope so."

"Was nothing found in his pockets by which to get a clew?"

"Nothing; but there are his clothes, and you can look through them; but I failed to find anything in my search."

The detective chief picked up first the cloak. It was made of the finest material, lined with dark blue flannel, and in the latter was a pocket in either side; but they were empty.

The coat was next examined, then the pants, and with like result, for not even the name of the maker was upon them, though they were of stylish cut and the best material.

In a pencil-pocket in the vest, and which was so small it had escaped the eye of the lawyer, the deft hands of Chief Gordon came upon a diminutive round object.

It proved to be a gold pencil of a peculiar style, with the name of the jewelers from whom it had been purchased stamped upon it, and the letters engraven neatly:

"P. G."

"These are the initials of his name, Percy Gray, and the same letters are engraven in the ring worn by that poor girl, and upon the dagger with which he killed her; but here is a slip of paper in the pencil-pocket," and the chief eagerly unfolded a bit of paper.

What was written thereon, in bold hand, he read aloud:

"CARSON KENEDY,

"Hanged Sept. —, 18—."

"Why, that is the name of the man hanged some time ago for murdering his employer," said the keeper, excitedly.

"Yes, and the cell he had was the same that this young man occupied."

"This is written in pencil, and it is strange that I should find it in that man's pocket."

"More mystery, chief, for you to clear up," said lawyer Rogers.

"Yes, sir, and it must be cleared up; but here

is a secret pocket in the cuff of his coat-sleeve; see, it is blackened, as from contact with metal."

"It was here that he had that pistol hidden, which he drew on you, and which the police failed to find when they searched him."

"Yes, there is where he carried it, and it was made for a pistol pocket without doubt."

"There is nothing else to find, Mr. Rogers," said the detective, after going again carefully over the clothes, and also searching the soft hat, which also bore no maker's name.

"Well, we can get no clew."

"Oh, yes, this pencil, for it has the jeweler's name, as you see."

"TOLMIE & STAFFORD, GALVESTON, TEXAS."

"Ah, yes."

"I will telegraph them to-night, asking who P. G. is that they sold the pencil to, for it is an odd pattern, as you see, and they will know."

"Send me word if you get reply."

"I will, sir," and Chief Gordon, known among the secret service fraternity by the sobriquet of "The Hornet," took his leave, and left the lawyer to his painful reflections.

Just at midnight a messenger called with an envelope inclosing a telegram that read:

"CHIEF GORDON,

"Special Detective League,

"New York.

"Pencil referred to in your dispatch was made for Mr. Paul Garnet, a rich cattleman, who was lost at sea a year ago."

TOLMIE & STAFFORD."

"More mystery," was the comment of Bonnell Rogers, Esquire, as he left the library to seek his bedroom.

Then he added:

"I'll solve it if it costs me ten thousand dollars."

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

DAYS passed away, and the death of the beautiful woman, unknown, and the daring escape of her murderer, became more than a "nine days' wonder."

But in the busy metropolis the tide of humanity goes on, progress is the watchword, and few look backward, and so the murdered and the murderer are shelved as an unfathomable mystery to many, though the wheel within a wheel of the Secret Service still worked at a solution.

The lawyer who had been the victim of the daring man accused had offered his reward of five thousand dollars for the assassin, the city fathers had put a price of ten thousand more upon his head, and the police department had added to those sums a bait of five thousand more.

Yet the prisoner still remained at large.

The dead girl had lain unclaimed by kindred or friend in the morgue, and then the sergeant had had her buried with funeral pomp, provided by the money left by Percy Gray, whom she had said with her last breath was her slayer.

Above her coffin a kind-hearted clergyman had read the service for the dead, and a lady, clad in deep mourning, and who had driven there in a carriage, with coachman in livery, had stepped forward and placed upon the grave a superb anchor of rarest flowers.

Then she had driven rapidly away, but not so rapidly that a fleet-footed detective could not follow, until he came to where he caught a passing hack, and springing into it ordered the driver to "Dog that carriage if you follow it to Doomsday."

Over the ferry the two vehicles crossed on the same boat, and up to the ladies' entrance of a fashionable hotel the liveried coachman drove and the occupant stepped out and glided within.

Quickly the detective followed, and asked the boy on duty at the door:

"Who is that lady?"

"I do not know, sir; but you can find out at the office."

To the office the detective went, and showing his badge, asked the question of the clerk.

"She came here to dinner only, did not register, ordered and paid for a carriage to Greenwood, and more I cannot tell you."

Up-stairs to the parlor Chief Gordon went, for he it was; but she was not there.

Quickly he reached the parlor and reception-rooms, to find that she had gone.

In vain he searched for her, in vain he asked questions, for she had most mysteriously disappeared.

The boy at the door had seen her enter, but she had not gone out that way, and no one else had observed her departure.

Still she was gone, and through his shut teeth the detective chief muttered:

"She could have told me all I would know; but I have let her escape me, when I had her in my grasp, as it were."

"Now to find her," and he went to his office to turn loose his force, and spread a network over the city in which to catch the mysterious woman in black, whose deep mourning veil had hidden her face from view.

But one by one his men came in, and all reported that the trail had been lost at the hotel door where the chief himself had given it up.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE NAME OF THE WIZARD DETECTIVE.

Thus the days passed by and the dead and the living actor in that midnight tragedy upon that fashionable up-town square were forgotten, except by a few—chief Gordon and his men.

They still remembered, and remembering plotted, planned, hoped, watched and waited.

One day Chief Gordon sat alone in his office, and upon his face rested a troubled look.

A visitor was announced, and the handsome face at once looked as serene as a May morn.

"Mr. Rogers, I am glad to see you," and he extended his hand to the rising young lawyer, who had become quite a hero through his prison adventures.

"Any news, chief?" asked the lawyer.

"Not a word since I lost the track of that mysterious woman."

"I was at the grave of that poor girl to-day."

"Yes?"

"A marble slab has been put there."

"No!"

"Yes, and a second bouquet, fully as beautiful as you described the first to be."

"No!" and the chief's face flushed.

"Upon the marble is engraven," and the lawyer read from a slip of paper:

"In Memory of
AN UNKNOWN WOMAN,
Killed by an
UNKNOWN ASSASSIN,
November 15th, 18—.
ERECTED BY THE ACCUSED."

The detective chief was a man not easily moved, but he was on his feet in an instant, while his voice fairly rung as he said:

"Lawyer Rogers, you astound me, sir; but the mystery that that grave holds I will yet fathom, be it deep as the sea. Ho, Schuyler!"

"Yes, sir," and a young man came into the room from an inner office.

"Detail men to guard the grave of that unknown woman in Greenwood, day and night, and find out from the keeper there when, how, and by whom the marble was put there over her."

"Yes, chief."

"And, Schuyler, have a man to visit every florist in this city, Brooklyn and Jersey City and find out who ordered the two anchors of flowers."

"Tell the guard if any one, man, woman or child, upon whom the slightest suspicion can fall, visits that grave, to arrest them and bring them to me!"

"Yes, sir; is that all?"

"No, it is just the beginning," was the grim response, and as the official turned away, the chief continued, addressing Bonhill Rogers:

"Mr. Rogers, I have had letters from Texas regarding the man who ordered that pencil."

"Well, chief?"

"It was a rich ranchero, Paul Garnet by name, and he was certainly lost at sea, swept overboard one night in a storm, from a Havana steamer; but how his pencil got into the possession of Percy Gray, the murderer of that poor girl, is the question."

"Like others, it must remain unanswered," and lawyer Rogers arose to go, when a letter was brought in and handed to the chief, who started, and said:

"This is addressed in the same handwriting that was upon that bit of paper giving Carson Kennedy's date of hanging."

"What! do you recognize it?" asked the lawyer, with surprise, and as the chief took the slip from a secret drawer in his desk, he continued:

"You are right, Gordon! the same hand wrote that, and addressed this letter."

"The envelope was carefully opened, and aloud the detective read:

"NEW YORK, Dec. 24th, 18—.

"CAPTAIN JAMES GORDON,

"THE HORNET:—

"Sir:—It is useless for you to waste time, money and thought in the vain endeavor to solve mysteries that one human being alone can fathom."

"The solution of the woman in black, the anchors of flowers, the marble slab at the unknown's grave, and who is her assassin, is not for you, so call off your spies, your hounds of the law, and leave the weird mysteries to be fathomed by one who works not for gold, but for justice—one whom you will only know as

"IVAN,"

"The Wizard Detective."

Chief Gordon was deeply moved, and with head bent down, his hands behind him, and the letter grasped firmly, he walked up and down, his brow black, his lips set, while Bonhill Rogers regarded him in grim silence.

"Well, Gordon, the plot thickens," at last said the lawyer.

"By Heaven it does! for now I have to find out just who is this Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective, for my honor, name, reputation as a Secret Service man, all are at stake now, and I must win," and the chief brought his clinched hand down upon the desk with a force that showed he was in deadly earnest.

"WELL, Ferret, have you anything to report?" and Captain Gordon, "The Hornet," turned to one of his best men, who entered his office several days after the reception of the mysterious letter from the person signing himself Ivan the Wizard Detective.

"I have, chief," answered Ferret, and he drew a chair near the desk.

He was a man who had the appearance of being a priest, rather than a detective, and he dressed accordingly, finding this mistaken impression, among those who saw him, of much avail.

Chief Gordon knew from "Parson Ferret's" manner that he had something to say of importance, so turned from the work in hand to listen, saying quietly:

"Well, Parson, out with it."

"Would you not think it surprising, chief, to see a fine carriage and horses, with coachman and footman in livery, coming away from an old rat-trap of a building in the Five Points?"

"Well, that depends, for a lady may have driven there to see a sick servant, or bent on charity."

"No, I mean that the rat-trap is the home of the occupant of the carriage."

"No?"

"Yes, sir, it is, and when I tell you that it is in the old Van Bokelen mansion, far over a hundred years old, you can understand what a place the owner of the vehicle has selected as a residence."

"Why, that old rookery was once one of the grandest mansions about New York, and was built by an old Dutch farmer, away back in seventeen hundred somewhere."

"Yes, sir, and for a quarter of a century was not inhabited, as some fearful crime had been committed there, I believe, and the place was said to be haunted," said Ferret.

"Yes, and the city growing about it, people moved in, it became at one time a prison, then a hotel, and afterward a tenement-house, which it is now, I believe."

"Yes, sir; but the occupant of that carriage now dwells there, and it has a most mysterious look, for without, it is the worst-appearing house in that rusty neighborhood, and the front door is nailed up, while the entrance is in what was once the court on the side."

"The carriage drives in there, stops at the door and the owner comes out, gets in and is driven away, for a drive in the Park; then the vehicle returns, the owner alights, and the carriage is driven off to a stable many blocks away."

"You know the stable?"

"Yes, sir, and I interviewed the coachman and footman."

"Well, who is the mysterious owner?"

"I cannot find out."

"What do they say?"

"That they were hired through a servants' agency, by an old man; were sent to the stable, where they found the carriage and horses all ready for them to take charge of."

"They board near, get good wages, have orders to report with the carriage every day at certain hours, drive the owner through the Park, and more they do not know."

"Or won't tell."

"Yes, sir."

"And it is an old man?"

"Sometimes an old man, then an old lady, and often a young and lovely girl, all of them dressed most elegantly."

"Perhaps the old owner of the place, with his wife and daughter?"

"Perhaps, sir; but he must be a queer one to live there, and to keep his daughter, if she is such, in a vagabond place, as that is."

"There are strange folks in the world, Ferret."

"Yes, chief, there are."

"Some old miser, doubtless."

"The carriage and servants, the dresses of the people don't show it, sir."

"You have seen them all?"

"I saw the young girl only, sir, for the carriage has wooden panel windows, that are kept closed tight while driving through the city, and are opened in the Park."

"I got a horse and rode out after it, and had a good view of the lady's face, and she is very lovely."

"Her hair is golden, her eyes large and dark, and she wears a black lace veil, yet her beauty shows through it, and she has a most innocent face."

"Strange, very strange; we must sift this matter, Ferret, and I appoint you especially to the work, so draw from the paymaster what money is needed and devote yourself to it, for there may be something behind all this luxury in the lap of poverty that we should know."

"Yes, chief, so I have thought."

"Well, see what you can find out about it."

"The people there call the young girl the Goddess of the Five Points."

"A good name, surely; but, anything new on the Percy Gray matter?"

"Not a word, sir; have you?"

"Nothing, though lawyer Rogers may have, as he sent for me to come to his house to-night, and I am going now," and he arose and drew on his overcoat.

Had he known what was then transpiring in lawyer Rogers's home he would have quickened his steps and not gone alone.

Bonhill Rogers was a bachelor, and a man of means. He had been left a comfortable living by his father, but had a taste for law and so studied for the bar, and was working his way upward rapidly.

Upon the evening in question he had enjoyed a good dinner, and in dressing-gown and slippers had gone to his library for a smoke, and to await the coming of The Hornet, whom he had sent for to consult upon an important matter that had come into his hands some days before.

He had just taken his seat when the servant announced:

"A man to see you, sir."

"Who is he, Mary?"

"I don't know, sir; but he looks as though he might have come for William's place," answered the girl, alluding to a coachman who had just been discharged.

"Show him in, Mary."

A man with red hair, red English whiskers and a complexion that almost rivaled them in hue entered.

He was dressed in a livery overcoat, and carried a high hat in his hand, with a black velvet band about it, fastened with a buckle.

A slenderly-built, wiry-looking form, quick in his movements, and with a face that was hard to read made up the personnel of the visitor.

"Ah, my man, you have come to see me in answer to my advertisement for a coachman?"

"No, sir, I have come to see you regarding a legal matter," was the reply.

"Ah! be seated, if it is important; but if not come to my office in the morning."

"It is important, sir, so I will speak now; you are the attorney who was made a prisoner some time ago, by a young man who was held for the murder of a young girl?"

Bonhill Rogers started. Was his clever captor found at last, he wondered.

"I am, sir; do you know aught of that man?"

"I do, sir."

"You know that I have offered a reward for his capture?"

"Yes, sir, of five thousand dollars."

"And the city has offered double that sum, while the Police Department make up a purse equal to the amount I am willing to give."

"Yes, twenty thousand in all."

"Are you prepared to earn it?"

"I could do so, if so I desired; but it is not to get that reward I have come," was the cool reply.

"Indeed! then what is your business?" and there was a hope in the breast of the lawyer that The Hornet would find it convenient to call just then, for the man had confessed that he could receive that reward if so he wished.

"My business, Mr. Rogers, is to get from you the cloak, coat, vest and hat left with you, and to return your clothing."

"Here, sir, are your things," and stooping, he picked up from the floor a large bundle he had brought into the library with him.

Breaking the string before the eyes of the astonished lawyer, he said:

"See, sir, all are here intact, and I wish the things of Mr. Percy Gray in return."

"No, sir! I keep those as a souvenir of having been most cleverly taken in by my master in cunning and pluck."

"There they hang, sir, as a part of the bric-a-brac of my library, and there they are to remain," and the lawyer spoke in the resolute tone of a man who meant just what he said.

"Mr. Rogers, I must have those things, if I have to pay you ten times their worth, along with a gold pencil that was with them," said the stranger.

"There is the pencil. I have devoted it to my own use, and shall also keep it as a balm to my wounded feelings," said the lawyer, with a sarcastic smile.

"I must have it, too, sir, to accomplish the ends I have in view."

"What ends have you in view?"

"That is my business, Mr. Rogers."

"From whom do you come, or who do you represent in this matter?" and the lawyer was all expectancy for the ringing of the bell that announced the coming of the Hornet.

"I serve Ivan, the Wizard Detective," was the calm reply of the stranger.

"Ha! again I hear of that mysterious personage."

"But it matters not if you serve the devil, I keep these things, and with mine you can do as you please."

"Thank you, I will," and the man stepped forward to grasp the pencil from the writing-desk, when Bonhill Rogers sprang to his feet, crying sternly:

"Hold, sir! I will not be bullied or robbed in my own house!"

The stranger smiled, and said very calmly:

"Mr. Rogers, unfortunately for yourself, your house has a balcony encircling that bay window, so just turn your eyes thither, and see

if I have not come here prepared to demand what I ask?

The lawyer glanced toward the bay window, and outside of the large panes stood two men, each holding in his hand a revolver, the muzzle pressed against the glass, their eyes running along the sights and covering him.

"Entrapped again, by Heaven!" cried the lawyer.

"You are, sir, for those men are dead shots, and a motion from me and they fire, and I am in deadly earnest to gain my purpose in coming here, as you shall see," and the red whiskers and wig were quickly removed, and the handsome face of Percy Gray was revealed to the astounded lawyer.

CHAPTER VI. GAINING A POINT.

It certainly was a trying moment for Bonnill Rogers, the lawyer, when he found himself again at the mercy of the escaped prisoner, who had so cleverly mastered him in the cell.

Before him was the very man whom the entire police and detective forces of New York, were upon the track of, and he had boldly come into the lion's den, as it were, demanding his clothing, and returning to the lawyer his own.

Bonnill Rogers was a brave man, and a daring one, one who would take big chances for success; but he was not a fool, and so he stood calmly before his visitor, when he saw that he was entrapped, for those two forms at the window showed that he was at the mercy of the man before him.

He longed for the coming of Captain James Gordon, the detective chief, and he tried even at that moment of peril and discomfiture, to plot for the capture of the escaped prisoner and his allies who held him under the cover of their pistols.

Did he touch the bell Mary would appear; but that touch might bring her there to find a dead man, for he knew the young, womanly-faced person before him was not to be trifled with.

He had some motive, more than the value of the clothes, to get them back into his possession, and he had guarded against mistakes, without the shadow of a doubt.

So the lawyer made the best of it; and said as calmly as he could:

"There are your clothes, sir, and, as I have no power to prevent you, take them."

"Thank you, Mr. Rogers, and, for your own sake, you need not let this visit go to the public, as I shall not make it known."

"It shall be known, sir, as also that you, upon whose head are rewards amounting to twenty thousand dollars, are in this city, and have accomplices to aid you in your bold acts."

"As you please, sir," was the cool reply.

"And I shall add five thousand to my other offer, and, mark my words, Mr. Percy Gray, I will yet see you a prisoner at the bar, and I tell you now I will defend you, fragile as your defense will be, for I cannot but admire your gigantic pluck."

"Thank you, sir, I shall keep your offer in mind. Good-night, sir, and expect to hear from me soon in a case that I think you can win."

As he spoke the daring young man replaced his beard and wig, threw the lawyer's garments upon the sofa, took his own from where they hung upon the wall, and wrapping them up turned to go, with a bow to Bonnill Rogers.

Instantly the lawyer stepped toward him, momentarily forgetting his danger, when two distinct taps at the window-panes caused him to stop and glance that way.

There were the shadowy forms without, and their pistols still covered him.

"You must not provoke those men to fire, Mr. Rogers," said the strange visitor, and he pointed toward the window, and then passed quickly out into the hall.

But the forms at the window remained, and Bonnill Rogers knew that they were covering the retreat of their leader.

A moment after the front door closed, but the two forms still remained, and the lawyer stood motionless.

Then came the ring of the door-bell, the steps of Mary in the hall, and in another minute the library door was thrown open and the Hornet entered.

"By Heaven, you are welcome, James Gordon—see!" and without moving from where he stood the lawyer pointed to the window.

But the shadowy forms had disappeared.

"Quick, chief! it has not been a minute since Percy Gray was in this room, and two of his men just left that window, where they stood outside covering me with their pistols," and Bonnill Rogers's voice rung out sharp as he spoke.

Captain Gordon was a man to act quickly, and in an instant his revolver was in his hand, and he had thrown the window up and sprung outside.

Bareheaded and without an overcoat as he was, he leaped from the iron balcony to the yard beneath, and darted around the house to the front gate, just as the lawyer came out of the front door.

The rumble of wheels, two blocks away, and going rapidly, reached his ears, and he sped

along with the speed of a deer, and soon overtook the carriage.

It was a hack and was driving rapidly.

"Halt, or you are a dead man!" he cried to the driver, at the same time presenting his pistol.

The horses were reined in with a suddenness that nearly threw them down, and the chief threw open the door, to suddenly hear a loud scream of fright, and be confronted with the frightened face of a woman.

"Pardon, lady, I was pursuing a murderer, and made a mistake in the carriage."

"I am an officer; drive on, sir," and the chief stepped back, panting with his long run, just as a policeman dashed up and called out:

"I arrest you, sir, for stopping that carriage."

"Hardly, Murphy," and the chief turned toward him.

"Captain Gordon! I was after beggin' your honor's pardon," the policeman cried.

"No harm done, Murphy, and I am glad to see you on the alert; but I had reason to believe that the escaped murderer, Percy Gray, was in that carriage."

"Oh the devil! with twenty thousand dollars rustin' in the bank, a-waitin' fer his findin'."

"Be the powers, chafe, but it's Michael Murphy would have been plazed to share that same reward with yer honor."

"I only wish you had the chance, Murphy," answered the chief, and he retraced his steps toward the home of the lawyer, whom he met, bringing with him his coat, hat and an umbrella.

"Well, chief, here are your overcoat and hat; but what of the prisoner?"

"Satan is his ally, Mr. Rogers, and he has again escaped; but now I know that he is in the city, I shall set the Secret Service machinery going again to find him."

"Come, and tell me of his visit to you, and if it was he I met descending your steps."

"A man with side-whiskers, high hat and livery coat?"

"Yes, sir."

"That was he," and entering the cosy library, the lawyer told the Hornet of his visitor and how he had gained his point and taken his clothes.

"Ah! what is this?" and the chief picked up a bundle from the corner of the desk.

"I saw that in the man's hand, as he stood talking to me; he evidently laid it there, when he was doing up his clothing in a bundle, and forgot it."

While Bonnill Rogers was speaking, the chief was gazing at the package, which was a few inches square and neatly done up.

"For Ivan, the Detective," he read aloud, and added:

"This is addressed in the same hand that wrote Carson Kenedy's name and date of hanging, and the letter to me."

"I hope I am not getting nervous; but I wonder if it is an infernal machine?" laughed the lawyer.

"I shall see," and cutting the string the chief carefully unfolded the package.

A box was revealed, and in it was some jewelry and a purse.

"The earrings, bracelet, ring and pocket-book of that murdered woman!" cried James Gordon, even his calm nature showing excitement.

"Who had them in keeping?" asked the surprised lawyer.

"Captain Hester, of the —th Precinct."

"Chief, what I wished to see you about was a little matter of detective work, foreign to this Percy Gray matter, so it can wait, and I will go with you to Captain Hester and see how those things got out of his possession," and soon after the two were in a hack driving to the police precinct.

CHAPTER VII. A DOUBLE SURPRISE.

"Ah, gentlemen, glad to see you; come in near the stove," said Captain Hester, as the detective and the lawyer entered his office.

"We came around, Captain Hester, upon a little matter of business, for Mr. Rogers, here, has had a visit from a gentleman whose head is now worth twenty-five thousand dollars, as five thousand more have been added to the reward," said Gordon in his quiet way.

"There is but one man's head which I know would bring that price, and that is the one who murdered that girl two months ago on — square."

"That is the man to whom I refer."

"And you have seen him, Mr. Rogers?" asked the police captain.

"Not an hour ago, sir."

"Where?"

"At my home, for he called upon me."

"Could you not detain him?"

"I made no effort to do so, as he had allies at my bay window, covering me with their pistols."

"This is startling news; but what occurred?"

The lawyer told the story of the visit of Percy Gray, his departure, the coming of Chief Gordon, the chase of the carriage and all, and the

police captain seemed dumb with amazement, and said:

"And this in New York city, where we have the best police and detective service in the United States, if I say so myself?"

"Why, if this story was in a novel, no one would believe it."

"It is certainly like a story of fiction, captain; but will you tell me where I can get a look at the jewelry taken from that girl that was murdered by this Will-o'-the-wisp prisoner, or rather fugitive?"

"I have them, sir, in my safe, and will show them to you," was the reply.

And the captain arose and approached the safe that stood in an alcove of the room with a curtain across it.

"You have heard nothing of her friends?"

"Not a word; and that is as mysterious as the fact that her murderer cannot be traced."

"I had my men watching the girl's grave for weeks, but they made no discovery of who it was who mysteriously placed the anchor of flowers upon it every few days," said the Hornet.

"Well, Gordon, we've all got to put our heads together and discover some way to catch that daring fellow, or we will be laughed at when it is found that he is right here in our midst."

And while he spoke the chief had arranged the combination and opened the safe.

But suddenly he stopped, hesitated, looked through a second drawer, opened a small compartment, and then said:

"What in the mischief did I do with that box?"

"You mean the jewelry?"

"Yes; I put all the things in a small woclen box, labeled it, and thought that I placed it away in this drawer; but it is not here."

"Who else has access to the safe?"

"No one but the superintendent knows the combination."

"Is this the box?"

And the detective handed over the package left by Percy Gray upon the lawyer's table.

Captain Hester was a man of nerve and could control his emotion; but he turned pale as he asked:

"Gordon, in the name of Heaven! how did you get this?"

"It was left by Percy Gray upon my desk to-night, and this paper was around it."

And Bonnill Rogers handed over the wrapper.

"For Ivan, the Detective," read Captain Hester, aloud, adding:

"Now, what does this mean?"

"It is a subject upon which both Mr. Rogers and myself need light, Captain Hester, for this Ivan seems to be an invisible member of a secret service bureau that is as mysterious as are the acts of Mr. Percy Gray."

"Captain Gordon and Mr. Rogers, I assure you I am utterly mystified," said Captain Hester, in an impressive way.

"I put that box in that safe myself, and no one, unless he knew the combination, could have gotten it out, and those about me are true as steel, while really no one comes in here excepting those to see me officially."

"What does it mean— Ah, my boy, what is it?"

And Captain Hester turned to a boy who just then entered.

"I wish to see lawyer Rogers, sir," was the answer.

"I am lawyer Rogers, my boy."

"Here is a note for you, sir; a gentleman asked me to bring it here to you."

"Who told you I was here, for they did not know at my home?"

"The gentleman told me, sir, I would find you in Captain Hester's office."

The three men looked surprised, and Bonnill Rogers tore open the envelope.

What he read caused him to start and exclaim:

"A communication from Mr. Gray!"

"One minute, Mr. Rogers. Boy, tell just where you got this?" and Captain Hester looked squarely into the youngster's face, as though he would read his inmost soul.

But the youngster did not change color, and answered firmly:

"It was given to me by a gentleman at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, sir, and I was told to come here with it."

"Do you believe him, Hester?" asked the lawyer, still holding the unread letter in his hand.

"Yes, I do."

"I do not," said Gordon, firmly.

"And why?" asked the police captain.

"Because we are being deceived."

"How do you mean?"

"That is not a boy."

This bold assertion fell like a bombshell, and the youngster made a bound toward the gate of the railing dividing the inner office.

But, quick as a flash, the Hornet leaped the rail and grasped him by the arm, dragging him back in front of Captain Hester, while he said:

"Boys do not have their ears pierced for earrings," and Gordon tapped the ears of the

messenger, whose face colored; but he said quietly:

"I am a girl, sir."

"And who are you?" asked Captain Hester.

"Put me down as *Unknown*," was the pert response.

"I must know your name, girl, and all about you," the police officer responded, sternly.

"Then find out from some one else, for I have nothing to say."

"You will not tell?"

"No, sir."

"You will have to go to prison."

"Very well, sir."

"What about this letter you bring?"

"I have nothing to say, sir."

"We will see how long you adhere to that resolve."

"Officer!" and in response to the call a policeman in attendance entered.

"Have this girl locked up, and in a cell by herself."

"Girl, sir?"

"Yes, this is a girl in boy's clothing."

"I see, sir."

"Make her comfortable, but allow no one to communicate with her."

"Yes, sir," and the officer was leading the girl away, when the captain called out:

"By confessing the truth you will escape punishment."

"I prefer the punishment, sir."

"You will not tell what we wish to know?"

"No, sir."

"Take her to her cell, officer," impatiently said Captain Hester, and he turned to Bonhill Rogers, who asked:

"Shall I read this letter now?"

"Yes, if you please."

It was written on the letter paper of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, dated half an hour previous to its delivery, and read:

"MR. BONHILL ROGERS:—

DEAR SIR:—I left upon your desk a box containing the jewelry taken from the body of the unfortunate unknown girl whom I am accused of murdering.

"I procured that box to leave the contents in your hands, with the request that you might hold them until I sent to you one who had a right to claim them, and I meant so to explain to you, but hearing a 'danger signal' without from my allies, I left without so doing.

"I prefer that they should be in your hands than in the possession of the police department, as they can be produced without red tape delays when needed, and hence I leave them with you.

"As I shall need your services in a legal way, I beg to inclose a bill as a retaining fee.

"Very truly,

"PERCY GRAY."

"It is a five hundred dollar bill," said Bonhill Rogers, holding it up.

"This is surprising, Mr. Rogers, and it looks after all, if we capture this daring fugitive it must be through you, and to-morrow I would like to have you talk with that girl and see if she will not be willing, from fear or bribery, or some cause, to tell the secret which she must know."

"I will do what I can, sir," said Mr. Rogers, while Chief Gordon, who had been looking at the letter said quietly:

"This is not written by the same hand that wrote on the slip of paper, on the wrapper of that box, and the letter to me."

"Well, Gordon, you have an eye for making discoveries; but I must go now, and I confess to being more in the dark than ever, about this mysterious man Gray," and after a plan of action was arranged with Captain Hester, the lawyer and the Hornet took their leave, leaving the amazed police captain to solve the riddle of how the box of jewels got out of his safe, and if by the treachery of some one about him, to find the traitor.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TENANTS OF THE HAUNTED ROOKERY.

In a part of New York city, long known as a locality to be avoided, from the many rumors regarding its being the center where lawless men were wont to congregate, seek havens of refuge away from the clutches of the police, and plot and plan bold deeds of outlawry and crime, there stood, at the time my story opens, an old building that had witnessed a city of stone, iron, marble and brick, cover the green fields that once surrounded it, and had sheltered beneath its roof five generations of people.

The theater of a crime, committed before the city had environed it with its solid blocks, it had been for a long time deserted, for the superstitiously inclined folk were wont to say that it was haunted by the ghosts of those who had been murdered beneath its roof.

At length however it was taken by the city as a jail, and then indeed did its walls encompass misery untold.

Given up as a prison-house, an enterprising landlord had turned it into a tavern, and refitting the ancient structure, had made its large rooms most comfortable; but only transient guests, strangers who knew not its history, would stop there, and the host saw that his investment was a failure, and the large, rambling old mansion, once the home of wealth, refinement and luxury, was left to its dreary soli-

tude, its wooden shutters were closed, and, though there were busy throngs of people about it, with lofty tenement-houses looking down upon it, it was allowed to remain severely alone, its court to become weed-grown, and its desolation to reign supreme.

But suddenly rumors went around the wretched neighborhood, that lights had been seen flashing in the upper windows at night, and the old story of its being haunted was revived, while the police, hearing these stories, took a more practical view of accounting for the lights, by believing that the place had become a den of thieves.

Imbued with this idea a raid was planned upon the premises, and a sergeant and five men went, after midnight, and burst open the massive front door.

But they stopped short at the entrance, for before them, in the wide hall, and at the foot of the broad stairway, stood a woman with white hair, holding a lamp in her hand.

It was a kind, motherly face, and the snowy hair showed the frosts of over three-score years.

She was dressed in deep black, excepting a narrow white collar about her neck, and a large gold cross hung upon her heart.

By her side, checked by the one hand resting upon his head, stood a massive Siberian bloodhound, and his eyes glared upon the blue-coated invaders most savagely.

"Gentlemen, I saw you enter the court, for I was at my window above, and came down to admit you."

"May I ask why my house has thus been broken into?"

And the old lady spoke with a calm dignity that was most impressive.

The sergeant of police looked about him, bewildered.

He had expected to find a hallway with the mold of years upon floor, wall and ceiling, and was prepared to confront desperate men.

He found instead a well-carpeted floor, neatly-papered walls, stair carpeting of the finest manufacture, and a lady in face and bearing whose appearance indicated that she was nearing the allotted span of life.

"I beg your pardon, madam; but this house has been so long deserted that, lights having been seen here, I deemed it the resort of evil characters," said the sergeant, politely.

"On the contrary, sir, it is the home of myself and family, and I have leased it from the agent having it in charge."

"Any other information you may desire, I will be glad to give."

"Good-night, gentlemen, and when next you call, pray ring the bell."

The sergeant bowed, retreated, and his men quickly followed, all of them crestfallen at their mistake; but he made his report to his superior, and that officer the next day went to the agent who had the property in charge.

"Who are those people who have rented the old Van Bokelen rookery?" he asked.

"I can only tell you that when I had never expected to rent the place again, an old gentleman came to me one day and said that he desired to lease it for three years, with privilege of renewal, and he signed the papers, paying cash in advance, for the whole time, without a word, the price I asked him," returned the agent.

"Who is he?"

"His name is Arthur Evelyn, for so he signed on the lease."

"And he has fitted up the old place and furnished it, though no one ever saw men at work there or furniture being taken within."

"Yes; and when he did it I do not know; but I went there one day to see if he wished any repairs done, and in answer to my ring an old lady let me in."

"I told her who I was, and she said all needed repairs had been done, and I was surprised to see that such was the case, while the glimpse I got at the inside showed that it was elegantly furnished."

"I was mystified to see such luxury in an old rookery and amid such surroundings, but said nothing."

"So am I; but try and find out something about the people for me, Mr. Clinton."

"Do you expect anything wrong, Captain Benedict?"

"No; but it is a mystery I should like to get at the bottom of."

"I tried to get out of the old man and of the old lady, too, something about them," resumed Mr. Clinton, the agent, "but they were non-committal, other than to say that they had known the place in the long-ago, and so desired to live there."

"Ah! some queer notion that they took of in their old age, doubtless," answered Captain Benedict, and he took his leave, to be informed by his sergeant, upon returning to his office, that an elegant carriage, with coachman and footman in livery, had been seen to drive into the court, back into the space where had formerly been the *port cochère*, and then depart with some one inside.

"Has it returned, sergeant?"

"Yes, sir, after a drive in the Park, and the occupant was a young girl, for I drove out be-

hind the carriage, and she lowered the panel window when she reached the Fifty-ninth street drive."

"They are doubtless some old people, who lived thereabouts in their youth, and do not realize how the city has grown, so have the men leave them alone, unless something occurs to attract attention to them," said Captain Benedict, and his orders were obeyed by the police.

But there was one man who still kept an eye upon the old mansion and its occupants, and he was Ferret Franklin, or "Ferret," as he was generally known among his comrades of the Secret Service League.

CHAPTER IX.

THE "GODDESS" AT BAY.

THERE was no more cunning detective in New York city than Ferret, and when his comrades were wont to give up a blind trail, he would take it up and follow it to the end.

He had numerous "irons in the fire," in his peculiar way, to look after, chief of which was his desire to get the twenty thousand dollars' reward for the capture of "Percy Gray, the murderer of the Beautiful Unknown," as he was called among the profession.

He had allowed minor affairs to wait, and had devoted his time and talents to the end of bringing the daring fugitive from justice to the gallows.

He was patient, enduring, energetic and untiring; but he was almost willing to admit himself beaten, when one day upon entering the office of his chief, he was greeted with:

"Well, Ferret, I saw Percy Gray last night."

"No, sir! who captured him?" and Ferret saw the reward, which he had built upon, like a castle in the air, fade away.

"No one has captured him; but I met him face to face last night at lawyer Rogers's house, and—he got away."

Ferret was amazed, for he knew that James Gordon was no man to allow a prisoner to escape him, where there was one chance in ten of holding him, so he said:

"Well, chief, you've got me surprised all over."

Then Captain Gordon told Ferret of what had occurred, and added:

"Now this is to be kept among a silent few, Ferret, and I am going to look up lawyer Rogers now to see the result of his talk with the girl."

As often happens, so often in fact as to impress the superstitious deeply, when we speak of a person that person appears, just then in came Bonhill Rogers.

"Speak of an angel and you hear the fluttering of his wings," said Gordon.

"You draw it kindly in the way you express it, Gordon; but you doubtless mean, being as I am a lawyer, 'Speak of the devil and his imps will appear,'" returned Mr. Rogers, with a laugh, as he nodded to Ferret, and sat down near the chief.

"Have it that way, if you think it more appropriate, Mr. Rogers; but what of your interview with the girl?"

"It is told in her own words:

"I have nothing to say."

"She would tell you nothing?"

"Not a word."

"Could you not frighten her?"

"No more than I can you."

"Did you try by promises of letting her go?"

"She said she rather liked it where she was."

"And bribery?"

"I offered her five hundred dollars to tell all she knew."

"And her answer?"

"She showed me a roll of bills double the amount and laughed at me."

"She is a pupil of Percy Gray."

"Evidently, and an apt one; but Captain Hester will hold on to her in the hope that her parents will miss her, and it may be found out who she is; but she will be well treated, though watched closely."

"It is all that can be done now; but I was about to tell Ferret, just now, when you entered, that you had added another five thousand to the reward for Percy Gray."

"Twenty-five thousand?" and Ferret gave a long whistle, while his eyes gleamed.

"Yes, that is the sum now on his head, Ferret."

"I shall go out and pick it up," said Ferret, with a light laugh, and he left the office of his chief, and strolled listlessly along, trying to form some plan of action.

Mechanically his steps led him to the very door of the old haunted homestead.

"Well, this is a coincidence, for I was not thinking where I was going, and I came here."

"This means something, and so I'll work this mine a little."

"Ah!" and, as he spoke, out of the court drove the liveried carriage of the mysterious tenants of the old rookery.

The wooden window was tightly closed, and the coachman slowly picked his way along the narrow, forbidding streets.

As the vehicle disappeared Ferret looked about him nervously.

Suddenly he walked off, turned into an alley.

and entered a tenement-house upon which was a sign reading:

"ROOM ON FOURTH FLOOR FRONT TO LET.
APPLY WITHIN, FIRST DOOR TO RIGHT."

There Ferret applied, and he was met by an Irishwoman who greeted him politely, mistaking him for a Catholic priest.

"Can I see that room you advertise?" he asked.

He ascended the squalid stairs, while the woman asked:

"W'u'd the loikes o' yez, father, be afther livin' there?" and she showed the room.

"Oh, yes, I need a room here for a few days, and I am glad to see that it is furnished."

"Fix it up as nice as you can for me, and here is your rent," and Ferret had seen, as he had believed it would, that the room overlooked the haunted mansion.

In that room, with the blinds closed, he sat the next afternoon, and watching, he saw the carriage drive in, some one, whom he could not see, enter it, and the vehicle rolled away.

Quickly he descended the stairs, and reached the street, as the carriage passed.

"Father, did yez see the coach of the Goddess?" cried Mrs. O'Brian, his landlady, from her window.

"Whose is it?" he asked.

"Divil a name can I ever tell yez, father; but we folks in the strate calls her the Goddess, though why, I'm not afther knowin' at all; but, oh, she's a beauty an' no mistake, as I've sene her swate face minny's the toime, and she scatters the silver among the cailder with a ginerous hand."

Ferret heard no more, but walked briskly to the nearest livery stable, and said quickly:

"My horse, please, and I'm in a hurry, my man."

He was soon mounted on a good saddle-animal, and he followed the carriage out into Central Park, where the occupant, a young girl, became visible by the opening of the forward part of the vehicle, which the footman let down upon reaching Fifty-ninth street.

So, for several days this dogging the vehicle was kept up by Ferret, who had certainly some motive in view, until with that strange tendency for nomenclature among some classes which had gained for the fair stranger the title of the Goddess, he, being seen daily upon horseback, became dubbed as the "Cavalier Priest," and "Father Spurs," his affectation of the priestly garb to aid him in his secret service work giving rise to the belief that he was really one of the Holy Order, and not a wolf in the wool of a lamb.

The stylish carriage and its beautiful occupant had also attracted general attention from the frequenters of Central Park, and she being always alone, and driving with closed blinds up to Fifty-ninth street and then having the vehicle opened, was a cause of comment with many.

One day, when as usual "Father Spurs" was following the carriage of the mysterious beauty, she gave an order to the coachman and he turned off into an unrequented drive.

Instantly the detective quickened his pace, and soon was alongside, for he meant to boldly address her, telling her it was dangerous for her to drive alone through the lower part of the city and to dwell there.

His motive was to hear her speak, to see if his words alarmed her, and to "break the ice," as it were between them, that it might lead to an acquaintance if possible.

But Ferret found himself confronted in a most unexpected way, just as he was raising his hat in his politest manner, for then came a low command to the coachman:

"Thomas, halt!"

Instantly the spirited horses were reined to a standstill, and, leaning quickly from the carriage, with her left hand the beautiful girl seized the bridle-rein of the detective's steed, and with her right held threateningly up in his face, distinct and ringing came the startling words:

"Hold, sir! though in the garb of a priest, you have dogged my steps continually."

"Repeat the offense, and it will be at the risk of death!"

CHAPTER X.

THROWN OFF THE SCENT.

To say that Ferret was amazed by the sudden act of the fair stranger, known as "the Goddess," would be to draw it mildly indeed.

He was completely taken aback, and, after delivering her warning, as the Goddess released his bridle-rein, he raised his hat, wheeled his horse, and rode back into the city.

"You can cancel the hire of the horse," he said to the livery-stable clerk, "for I shall need him no more," and after that day "Father Spurs" was not seen taking his customary ride on horseback through the Five Points neighborhood, which was a disappointment to many of the idlers, as, with a stylish carriage, and a mounted priest, as they believed him to be, to be dwellers in their midst, they began to think their locality was becoming fashionable, and, as Mrs. O'Brian, Ferret's landlady, put it:

"The Saints be good to us, but the neighborhood is gittin' as fashionable as Fifth avenue."

After having disposed of his horse at the stable, Ferret made a bold move, and that was to go straight into the weed-grown court-yard and ring the bell at the old mansion door.

A servant in livery promptly responded.

"Is the master at home, my man?"

"He is, sir, but he receives no visitors."

"Mrs. Evelyn, then, I would like to see," said the detective.

"Neither does she receive visitors," was the cold rejoinder.

"It is very important that I should see one of them, or both, my man," and measuring the caliber of the liveried servant, Ferret placed in his hand a twenty-dollar gold-piece.

It was instantly returned with the remark:

"There is no business, sir, that my master attends to, nor will he break through his rule of endeavoring to live a quiet life, undisturbed by those who would bore him with their presence."

"Kindly step outside, sir, that I may close the door."

Ferret obeyed, with the quiet remark to himself:

"Bluffed again!"

After a moment, as he walked away, he muttered:

"Wonder if I am not on the wrong scent, after all, for I certainly can find nothing suspicious here, other than that these people dwell in this terrible locality and wish to be let alone."

"But, somehow, it is in my mind to connect Percy Gray with this most mysterious family."

"I'll go and see if Mr. Rogers cannot find out if these people are connected with the old Van Bokelen family."

And he wended his way to the attorney's office.

"Mr. Rogers is engaged just now, sir, but will soon see you," said the office-boy.

And the detective sat down to wait patiently, and to plot as was his wont at all times.

Within his inner, or secret office, where "walls had no ears," sat Bonhill Rogers, and he was not alone.

His companion was an old lady, with a serene, kindly face, white hair, and clad in deep mourning.

A heavy black veil partially hid her face, and she had asked for a private interview with the lawyer, which he had granted.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing, madam?" he had asked in his pleasant way.

"My name is of no consequence, sir, this being of far more importance when calling upon a lawyer for his services," was the cold response.

And the lady placed in the hand of Bonhill Rogers a roll of bills.

"This is a liberal retaining fee, madam," he said, glancing at the sum total of the bills.

"I am willing to pay it, sir, and more, when the time comes."

"How can I serve you, madam?"

"It is a strange case, sir, for it includes a mysterious disappearance, that appears to me as a desertion."

"Yes."

"A young man of thirty, a clerk on twelve hundred a year, resided with his family, a wife and two children, in a cosy cottage on Long Island."

"He had married for love, and his wife is a very beautiful woman, while he was wrapped up in his family and his little home, the only drawback being that he was most ambitious to win riches."

"One day he came home with a troubled air, gave no excuse to his wife for his gloom, and a week after quietly disappeared."

"His accounts at his place of business were square to a cent, he left not a dollar unpaid, and, though not known to have a dollar in the world, he left with his wife a check for five thousand, with a letter of farewell, and the words:

"You nor my children will ever see me again in this world."

"When was this, madam?"

"Two months ago."

"And you can find no trace of him?"

"None."

"What are you to him or his wife?"

"That has nothing to do with the case in point, sir," was the reply.

"I am to have but half of your confidence, then?"

"You are to have none of my confidence, but all that I can tell you of those for whom I act."

"I see; but do you lean toward suicide as the theory of this man's disappearance?"

"All others do, but I do not."

"Ah!"

"Hence I come to you."

"His name, please."

"Maurice Vertner."

"Something romantic."

"Yes; and perhaps not his own."

"I see; what is his place of nativity?"

"England."

"Has he been long in this country?"

"He came here when but fourteen, landing from a vessel on which he had served as a cabin-boy, having run off from home on account of cruelty; such is his story."

"What part of England, madam?"

"He never made known."

"And he held no correspondence with any one abroad?"

"Not to the knowledge of his wife."

"And she?"

"He was her father's clerk, and she married against the wishes of her parents, who were very rich."

"She was discarded, and the clerk was dismissed; but he had held a good position, saved up a little money, and bought the cottage on Long Island, where they lived comfortably, for he secured, as I have said, another clerkship, paying him twelve hundred a year."

"His wife believes he is dead, as do all others, excepting myself, and hence I come to you to place the matter in your hands, and money needed to investigate I will give to you."

"Your address, madam, please?"

"That has nothing to do with it, sir, as I am but a go-between from the interest I feel in the deserted, or widowed wife, as the case may be."

"If you wish to communicate with me, do so through the Personal column of the Herald by simply stating, 'Attorney needs more money,' and I will call."

"You are inclined to act with mystery, madam."

"I am inclined to think my personal matters, sir, are none of your business, until I consult you regarding them."

"I acknowledge the just rebuke, madam."

"You will take the case, Mr. Rogers?"

"With pleasure, madam."

"Thank you; good-morning," and dropping her veil over her face the lady walked out of the room with the air of one upon whom old age was beginning to tell.

As she passed through the outer room, Ferret arose and was greeted by the lawyer, who escorted the lady to the outer door, and returning, said quickly:

"Follow that lady, Ferret, and let me know where she goes and who she is."

Ferret disappeared, but soon returned, and entered the private office.

"What, have you found out so soon?"

"All I can, Mr. Rogers."

"Well?"

"Three hours ago I rode away from the Five Points neighborhood, following on horseback the carriage of that mysterious personage the folks of that locality call the Goddess."

"Yes, Ferret."

"I have dogged her in her drives pretty regularly, and made up my mind to speak to her in the Park, giving her a piece of unsolicited information that it was dangerous for her to drive and live in the neighborhood where she does, although she is as safe among those people, I must admit, as I am in this priestly garb I assume."

"Then why warn her?"

"To get a chance to speak with her."

"What has she to do with this old lady?"

"I will soon let you know, sir."

"To my surprise and alarm, when I approached the carriage, with my sweetest smile and most elegant bow, she said something to her driver in a low tone, and the horses stopped short."

"Then she arose, leaned forward, seized my bridle-rein, and in her left hand held a small revolver, while she told me, in language not to be misunderstood, that I would end my days suddenly if I dogged her steps again."

Bonhill Rogers burst out into a merry laugh, while Ferret said:

"I can enjoy it now, Mr. Rogers, but somehow I didn't just then see the joke, and I left rather hastily."

"I returned to the stable, gave up my horse, concluding to take no more exercise just now in the saddle, and came to see you, when lo, that old lady goes from your office to that very carriage which awaits for her a square away."

"No!"

"It's a fact, sir."

"Can you not be mistaken, Ferret?"

"No, sir, I know the carriage, horses, coachman, footman, and harness well, and the latter has the initial E on it."

"Well, she may be the mother of the Goddess?"

"She may be, sir; but I left that carriage in the Park, going out, and I have come directly here, and I find it down-town, and a different occupant in it, from the one I saw."

"They drove rapidly."

"No carriage, Mr. Rogers, could drive by the old mansion, change occupants, and get here in this time, and if it came straight, it would have to drive rapidly, I assure you."

"Was the Goddess in the carriage just now?"

"No, sir."

"This is strange; but it tells me who my client is."

"And I would like to know, sir, if you can ascertain for me just who those people are in

the old rookery; whether they are heirs of the Van Bokelens, or what?"

"No, for Captain Hester and your chief tried to do so, and Mr. Clinton, the agent for the estate, either knows nothing about them, or professes not to do so."

"Well, sir, that adds to the mystery, unless you know the old lady having just called upon you."

"As to that, your information just now tells me who she is; but she called upon a legal matter for another party, and would tell me nothing of herself."

Ferret was perplexed, worried, and he admitted it, and then left the lawyer to consult with his chief, and try to start off on a fresh scent.

"I'll get Old Gaslight and Jack Boland on the track with me, and we must get at this mystery, or rather mysteries, for I'm like the frog trying to hop out of the well, I go back three feet to every two I make forward."

CHAPTER XI.

WOLVES IN SHEEPS' WOOL.

"THAT girl is like an elephant on my hands, for I do not know what to do with her," said Captain Hester, referring to the young girl who had been taken playing the part of messenger and dressed in boy's clothes.

He addressed his sergeant, and it was very true that they knew not what to do with the young girl.

She was pretty, intelligent and shrewd, while she had an amount of pluck and determination that was surprising in one of her years, for she could not have been over fourteen.

She had been pleaded with, threatened, offered large bribes, and talked to by the captain and his men, but all to no avail; she would have nothing to say, appeared perfectly satisfied with her lot, and was not to be cajoled or bullied into a confession of what she knew.

One day a priest put in an appearance at the precinct and asked to see any Catholics that there might be among the prisoners.

Here was a chance, thought Captain Hester, if the girl proved to be a Catholic, of getting some information from her.

The sergeant was sent to her cell, and returned with the report that she was a Catholic and wished to see the priest, and he was told by Captain Hester just the state of affairs, and asked to obtain from her something in the way of the truth, that she might be gotten out of prison, or at least her case be decided upon.

"I am convinced that she knows the secret of Percy Gray's hiding-place, and if he can be captured through her, I will be glad to see her go free and have her share of the reward offered for him, for a more cold-blooded crime was never committed than for that man to murder that poor girl as he did," said Captain Hester.

The priest promised to get the girl to tell the truth about the affair, and accordingly visited her in her cell.

"My child, I am pained to know that you bear in your heart the secret of a great crime, a great wrong done, and I deem it my duty to tell you to make a confession of it so that justice may be done," said the priest, in a kindly way.

"Father, I have done no crime, for I merely brought a letter here from a gentleman who gave it to me, and I dressed as a boy because I can make more money and can support my invalid mother far better in those clothes than I can as a girl," she replied, with feeling.

"If I plead with the captain to allow you to go to the Home of the Holy Sisters, will you tell them the secret that it is so important for the sake of justice that the police should know?"

"Oh, take me away from here, father! for though I try to be brave, this is a terrible place," the girl cried, covering her face with her hands.

The priest seemed deeply moved, and leaving the cell sought the captain in his private office.

"She says that she merely bore a letter from a gentleman to some one here, and dressed in the garb of a boy, as she makes more money for her invalid mother."

"She does not belong to any of the messenger offices here, for my men have investigated," replied Captain Hester.

"That may be, sir, and she would not tell me who she was, or where she lived; but she broke down in the end, from her defiant manner, and I think, if she could be gotten under the influence of the Good Sisters, she would be induced to tell at least her name and where her home is, and that might be a basis to work on."

"You are right, father, and I am willing to do what I can."

"I spoke to Judge Pitman upon the subject, and he will give me the proper paper committing her to the charge of the Sisters, if you, with them, will make yourselves responsible for her during the few days she is with you, for, if she does not tell what we would know, and I am convinced that she knows, I will have her stand trial for wearing a disguise, and committed also for contempt, in not obeying the court and speaking out."

"I will send a couple of Sisters for her, in the ambulance of the Institution," said the priest,

and he departed from the station; but a couple of hours after a covered wagon drove up to the door of the police office, and upon it in gilt letters were the words:

"HOME OF THE GOOD SISTERS."

In the vehicle were two of the representatives of the Institution, clad in their black dresses and white bonnets, and they brought a letter from Father Pincus, the priest, asking Captain Hester to give to their care the young prisoner in his charge.

This the captain did, after having had a talk with the Sisters as to what he wished to ascertain from the girl, and being led out from her cell she entered the vehicle with the good women, and the driver started his horse off at a brisk trot, just as The Hornet put in an appearance at the precinct.

"Well, Gordon, any news?" asked Captain Hester.

"Well, yes, there is a trifle more mystery in the air, regarding the strange tenants in the old Van Bokelen mansion in the Five Points," and Captain Gordon told the police officer of Ferret's experience in the Park, with the Goddess of the Five Points, and of seeing the carriage at Bonhill Rogers's office with another occupant so soon afterward.

"This is strange, Gordon; but we must be able soon to get a clew that will be of use, for this mystery I do not like," returned Captain Hester.

"I'll tell you, Hester, an idea I have to find out something regarding this fugitive Gray, and, for the life of me, I cannot but connect him in some way with these tenants of the Haunted Rookery."

"That is strange, for I see no connection."

"Nor is there anything tangible, but both Ferret and myself have gotten the idea into our heads that there is a link between them, and it will not be drowned, so I thought I would begin by working a little scheme with that girl you hold as prisoner."

"Well?"

"It may be harsh treatment, but my idea is to hold a mock trial here over her case, and sentence her for life, nominally, and my word for it she will break down and confess all."

"By Jove, not a bad idea; but I just tried another scheme that will break her silence, I think."

"What was that?"

"Well, Father Pincus came here this morning, and I told him about her, and he tried to get her to confess what she knew; but though she would tell him nothing, she broke down and wept, and you know she was as defiant as a mustang toward us."

"She was indeed."

"So he suggested that I should let her go to the Home of the Good Sisters, and—"

"The Home of the Good what?"

"Good Sisters."

"Is that what he called them?"

"Yes."

"What was his name?"

"Father Pincus."

"And his church?"

"Saint Patrick's."

"Hester, I guess I'll give up trying the girl by mock trial."

"It will do, if the Sisters don't get her to tell what we would know."

"They won't do anything for us."

"Why?"

"Because there is no such institution in the city."

Captain Hester sprang to his feet.

"Do you mean it?"

"I do, and Father Pincus is an arrant fraud."

"You have been duped, Hester, and Percy Gray is proving too much for us."

Captain Hester grew white with anger, and rung the call-bell savagely.

Instantly half a dozen officers were sent off on the trail of the ambulance, and others to find out about "Father Pincus," and the "Good Sisters."

"But the name was on the covered vehicle, in bright gold letters," he said, seizing at a grain of hope.

"Painted on there to help the cheat, Hester; but come, you are beaten, as I have been, by that daring fugitive, and we can sympathize with each other, while lawyer Rogers also needs consoling."

"The girl is gone, and taken out of your grasp in the same clever way that this Percy Gray does everything he undertakes, so you must grin and bear it; but, if you with your force, I with my detectives, and Rogers with his law cannot get at the bottom of this case, we had better give up practicing and go to preaching."

"There comes Michael Kane."

And the two officers turned eagerly toward a tall, splendid-looking policeman who just then entered, and saluting, politely said:

"There is no Father Pincus, captain, or any such institution as 'Good Sisters' Home."

"That settles it; wolves in sheep's clothing got into your fold this day, Hester, and carried off a highly-prized lamb," laughed The Hornet, and Captain Hester returned:

"Yes; I give it up; the girl is gone."

CHAPTER XII.

FORGING THE LINKS OF MYSTERY.

To satisfy himself in the matter regarding the woman in black, his client, Bonhill Rogers determined to go out to the home of the deserted wife and endeavor to learn from her something in regard to the one who was acting in her interest.

"I can take Gordon with me as an assumed clerk, so that I will have the benefit of his keen eyes on the affair, and I will suggest as an excuse for calling that I desired to learn more regarding her husband," he said to himself.

And his office boy was at once dispatched with a note to the detective chief.

Some time after the boy returned and said:

"Mr. Gordon will meet you at the 34th street ferry, ready to go, sir; and a gentleman asked me to give you this note."

The lawyer glanced at his watch and said:

"I have an hour yet."

And then he tore open the envelope, and his face showed that he was surprised at what he read, and he quickly called the boy.

"Who gave you this note?"

"A gentleman, sir."

"Did you ever see him before?"

"No, sir."

"How came he to give it to you?"

"He was coming up-stairs, and seeing me, asked if I was not your office-boy, and when I told him I was he said:

"Give this to Mr. Rogers and it will save me the trouble of going up-stairs."

"Describe him."

"He was not a large man, sir, was neatly dressed, and wore a full blonde beard."

"He had black eyes?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was Percy Gray, as I live!" cried the lawyer, after he had dismissed the boy.

Putting on his overcoat, he started for the place of meeting with The Hornet, and they both reached the ferry at the same moment.

"You know something?" said Gordon, with a smile.

"No, but I am going out to see if I can discover anything, and I wish you to act as my clerk."

"I am willing, of course; but I have a joke on Captain Hester."

"Well?"

"He has placed the girl in boy's clothing in an institution."

"No! Could he find out nothing from her?"

"He found out that he was duped," and The Hornet told the story of the bogus priest and Sisters.

"And I have something to tell," said the lawyer as they took their seats in the train.

"Well, I'm prepared to hear anything now, even that you have had another visit from Percy Gray."

"Egad, you almost hit it, for he it was, I am sure, who gave my office-boy this letter," and Bonhill Rogers handed the letter he had received to the detective to read.

It read:

"NEW YORK CITY.

"BONNILL ROGERS, Esq.:—

"Sir:—In the Morris Lunatic Asylum you will find on the books the following entry:

"Della Howard, aged 19, black eyes, black hair, well-formed, and pretty."

"Entered May 1st, 18—, by Lawrence Kane, of Connecticut."

"Said Della Howard has mania for believing herself rich, and other than she is. Incurable."

"Accommodations, the best."

"Go out to this asylum at your leisure, see this Della Howard, hear her story in full, and *sift it*."

"You will find that she is *not mad*, that she is the victim of a guardian, who married a widow with one daughter, living in the Far West."

"This guardian, under the influence of his wife, pretended to take Della Howard from boarding-school to his home, took her to a madhouse instead and brought his step-daughter East to personate the heiress, and the three are now unjustly enjoying the fortune of a poor girl who is dying in an asylum."

"See for yourself if I am not right, and do an act of justice."

"If you need other advice put in the *Herald* personal column simply:

"More light needed from Ivan, the Wizard Detective."

With respect.

"INVISIBLE IVAN."

"Well, this does beat all I have ever had anything to do with," said The Hornet, after reading the letter over carefully.

"It is most strange; but I shall look it up, and if these mysterious cases continue to drop into my hands I shall have to get a partner to attend to regular business; but here we are at the station," and the two friends, for such they had become, left the train and took a hack for the cottage of Maurice Vertner.

It was a cosy home, and Mrs. Vertner came in with a look of worry upon her beautiful face, for she dreaded tidings of her husband.

"Mrs. Vertner, I am a lawyer, as you doubtless saw by my card, and I have come out to see you, to ascertain all I can, that I may not be in the dark before undertaking your case."

"This gentleman is Mr. Gordon, my clerk."

Mrs. Vertner's face was the picture of amazement, as she replied:

"I am wholly in the dark, sir, as to your meaning."

"Your friend, an elderly lady, called and placed your case in my hands, paying me a liberal retainer, and requesting that I would solve the mystery of Mr. Vertner's remarkable disappearance."

The look of surprise upon the lovely face deepened, and Mrs. Vertner said:

"You amaze me, sir, for I have not authorized any friend to do this, and my poor husband is dead, I am confident, for his disappearance leads to that belief alone."

"You surprise me, my dear madam; but a lady dressed in deep mourning, and with snow-white hair, called at my office and engaged me to find your husband, whom she does not believe dead."

"Would to God it could be so proven; but no, it cannot, and I feel that from overwork his mind wandered, and he took his own life, for he was last seen going on board of a Staten Island ferry-boat at night, and he plunged into the river, I am sure."

"You have no objections to my prosecuting a search for him, as I am already employed to do so, and well paid for my services?"

"None, sir, of course, and I thank you; but who this mysterious lady can be I do not know, as I can recall no one answering to her description among even my acquaintances, and surely not among my friends."

"It is strange, Mrs. Vertner; but as I have your permission now, I will go on with my search, only I would like to have you give me the full particulars of your husband's age, birth-place, early career, habits and who are his friends."

This Mrs. Vertner did, and the lawyer and the detective took their leave, the latter accompanying Bonhill Rogers to his office.

"A letter was just left for you, sir," said the boy.

It was addressed in a clear, feminine hand, and the lawyer read it aloud:

"DEAR SIR:—

You were paid to find Maurice Vertner, not to endeavor to ascertain who your client is.

"I am convinced that he is not dead, and by finding him your reward will be liberal, aside from the fact that you have done a good act."

"THE WOMAN IN BLACK."

"By Jupiter's ghost! but our steps are dogged as sure as my name is Gordon," cried The Hornet springing to his feet.

"True, and it is hardly pleasant to feel that we are."

"Send a man here, Gordon, to arrest any one leaving a note at my office who is not known to my boy," and he called out:

"Elliot, who left this note?"

"A young girl, sir."

"How old?"

"About fourteen."

"Describe her, for you have an eye to the fair sex, my boy, and I know she did not escape your particular attention."

"She was dressed very prettily, sir, had short red hair and black eyes—"

"The messenger-girl, now in petticoats," cried Gordon.

"Sure; but come, let us go out to the madhouse in Jersey and follow the advice received in the other letter, for somehow I feel drawn toward that poor girl."

"If such a girl exists, Mr. Rogers," answered the detective.

"We shall soon know," was the reply, as they started for the ferry, The Hornet having sent a message to his clerk to have a man go on duty at the lawyer's office until further orders.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEAUTIFUL MANIAC.

THE sun was near its setting, when the rickety vehicle, hired by the lawyer, drove up to the asylum, and he and the detective sprung out at the gate.

The superintendent soon appeared, in answer to the card sent him, and greeted the visitors coldly, while he asked:

"How can I serve you, sir?" and he addressed Bonhill Rogers, whose card he held in his hand.

"I would like to know, sir, if there is a young lady confined here by the name of Delia Howard?"

"There is, sir, and she is raving mad."

"Indeed! is it as bad as that?"

"It is, sir."

"What is her peculiar trait of madness, may I ask, doctor?"

"She imagines that her parents are dead, and have left her a vast fortune, while she says she is not mad, but is being persecuted by those who should protect her."

"Do you know those who are her protectors?"

"Certainly, sir, for her parents brought her here, and she has the best accommodations, poor girl; but all efforts toward the recovery of her reason are hopeless."

"I would like to see her, doctor, if you please."

"That I cannot permit, sir, as she is under the head of incurables, and her parents particularly requested that no visitors should see her."

"I must urge it, sir, as from her memory an important matter must be decided."

"My dear sir, she has no memory."

"I hope you will permit me to decide that for myself, doctor."

"I cannot, sir, under any circumstances."

"My entreaties are useless?"

"They are."

"Perhaps, Captain Gordon, you may persuade the doctor to change his mind," and the lawyer turned to The Hornet.

"My dear sir, I hope you will reverse your decision, and allow Mr. Rogers and myself to see this unfortunate lady, as a most important result hangs upon our doing so," said Gordon, blandly.

"I can but repeat to you, sir, what I said to this gentleman; it is impossible," was the firm reply.

"Now, my dear doctor," said Gordon, "you certainly do not wish to get yourself into trouble?"

"I fear no trouble, sir."

"I pray you cast your eye over this gold badge that I wear, of 'Chief Detective,' and this one of 'U. S. Marshal,' and this one, 'Special Police,' and also at this one which reads, 'Deputy Sheriff,' and see that I speak with authority when I demand to see that lady."

"No, sir, not unless I have permission from her parents, for she has done no wrong, is a beautiful, innocent girl; but she is utterly mad, and I will permit no one to see her."

"My dear doctor, suppose I tell you that you can save yourself trouble, for instance, that you might be arrested as being in league with those who are not her parents, in keeping her here?"

"Great God! do you even hint at such a thing?"

"I do, and a conversation with the lady will set you right, so let us see her, please."

The doctor saw that he had men to deal with who would not be put off, so he said nervously:

"I will send the matron to prepare her for visitors."

In ten minutes more the doctor ushered the visitors into a small but pleasant room, with iron grating over the windows, and the door a massive one.

A bookcase, containing novels, a sewing-stand, a piano, an easel upon which was an unfinished painting of the room and of its occupant, kneeling, with clasped hands raised toward Heaven, and artistically executed, a bed, lounge, easy-chair, writing-desk, and some pieces of fancy work, formed the contents of the cell, for though gilded with luxuries, it was nothing more.

Rising, as the visitors entered, a maiden of eighteen confronted them.

She was very beautiful, almost weirdly so, with her snow-white complexion, large, dark, brilliant eyes, and red lips, and a wealth of ebony-hued hair that was plaited, and hung far below her slender waist.

She was dressed neatly, and with an air of tsyle that seemed natural, and turned upon her visitors her earnest, lovely eyes, while she said:

"I do not think I have had the pleasure of meeting you before, gentlemen; but the matron said it was I that you asked for."

"It was Miss Delia Howard; are you she?" responded Bonhill Rogers, deeply impressed with the maiden's appearance.

"I am what this madhouse has left of what was once a sunny-hearted girl of that name," she said in a tone of deep sadness, and with a look that was pitiful in its misery.

"May I ask if your parents are living, Miss Howard?"

"Oh, no, or I would not be here; but I have a guardian, who professes to be my father, as his wife pretends to be my mother, and they placed me here, even deceiving the superintendent there, who believes me mad."

"But mad I am not, though God knows I am verging onto madness, and ere long will become a raving maniac, if I am not taken from here."

"Oh, God! if I could only go from here I would give them all my inheritance, and I beseech you, sir, to save me!" and she dropped upon her knees before Bonhill Rogers, while the doctor, standing at the grated door, said:

"I told you, sir, that she was mad, and her companions here even recognize it, and call her the beautiful maniac."

"No, no, sir, do not believe him, for as Heaven is my judge I am not mad!" and the sweet voice rung out appealingly, while she still knelt, with clasped hands upraised toward the lawyer.

"By heavens! doctor, that girl is not mad, and woe be unto those who have placed her here," and the voice of the young lawyer rung like a bugle through the corridors of the asylum.

CHAPTER XIV.

DRIVEN FROM EDEN.

It is not back to Biblical days, kind reader, that I am going to find the Eden of my story, but to the present time, where, upon the Connecticut shores of the beautiful Long Island Sound to-day stands a lordly home, well fitted even for the home of a king.

Its history is soon told, for, built with lavish expenditure by a millionaire, and furnished with all that money and a refined taste could purchase or suggest, the master of this beautiful home died, soon after occupying it, and, his wealth having been swept away by speculation, it was offered for sale, just as it stood, with furniture, horses, carriages, pleasure-boats, yacht and all to the highest bidder for cash.

He was found in a returned miner from the gold fields of California, and he paid down a price that gained him an estate at one-fifth its real value, and was a home to be proud of.

He had a boon companion, a broker, one who managed all of his finances for him, and in his hands he placed the conduct of his vast wealth, for, an open-souled, extravagant fellow, he knew nothing of business.

In early life this wealthy miner had secretly married a young and poor girl, whom he dearly loved, and the wife had died in giving birth to a little girl.

Without much means the widower placed his little infant daughter in care of a good woman and went to the far West.

After years' stay there he came East a millionaire, met with an accident on the railroad, and being tenderly nursed by a fellow-traveler, the two became boon companions.

That fellow-traveler was the banker, and he was repaid for his care of his rich friend, by having the entire charge of his estates turned over to him.

He suggested investments that turned out splendidly, caused him to buy the Eden Homestead, and had the most implicit confidence of his friend.

The little girl had grown to the threshold of womanhood, promised to be a beautiful woman, and had been most tenderly cared for by her father.

She had been placed at a fashionable boarding-school in a Western State, and all accomplishments had been taught her.

But suddenly the millionaire died, and to the care of his friend he left his child, and in his hands the management of his estates.

Shortly after the death of the rich man, the banker went West, and returned with a wife, a widow, whom he installed as mistress of Eden.

She had one child, a daughter then at boarding-school, and by a strange coincidence she bore the same name as the millionaire's daughter.

It was an accident, a coincidence, but it was turned to good use, for several years after moving into Eden the banker and his wife went West, they said, to bring home the heiress, their ward.

She returned with them, a sickly, wretched-looking girl of nineteen, who went little into society, and preferred the seclusion of her own room.

Retired from business, the banker, a poor man comparatively, a few years before, was enjoying the luxuries of a superb home, when one day a carriage drove up to the marble steps of the mansion, and two gentlemen alighted.

The liveried butler who came to the door said that his master was in, or about the place somewhere, and he ushered the visitors into the parlor that was a scene of rare beauty and luxury, with velvet divans, easy-chairs, *bric-à-brac*, and all that wealth could buy to adorn and make beautiful a home.

In a few minutes the master of Eden appeared and a glance showed him that his guests were unknown to him.

"Mr. Lawrence Kane, I believe?" said a man of medium height, but with a clean-shaven, strong, intelligent face, and dignified but courtly manner.

"Yes, sir, and you are—"

"Bonhill Rogers, an attorney-at-law, and this is Captain James Gordon, Chief of the Secret Service League, of which you have doubtless heard?"

Mr. Lawrence Kane bowed and answered coldly:

"As I have an attorney, sir, and do not need the services of a detective, may I ask why I am honored with this visit, gentlemen?"

"You will need a lawyer, Mr. Kane, to get you out of the detective's clutches, sir, unless we can arrange the matter to my satisfaction that brings me here to-day," was the stern response of Bonhill Rogers.

The retired banker turned pale at this, but said with anger:

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Permit me to ask why you are occupying this home, as its owner, and passing off your invalid step-daughter as the heiress and daughter of the late Mr. Howard?"

Lawrence Kane started back and became livid, while twice he essayed to speak before he could do so.

"You astound me, sir, for I am the guardian of Miss Howard, and have entire charge of her estate."

"I do not deny that, sir, and it has been unfortunate for Miss Howard that such is the case."

"But I come not here to argue the pros and cons of the affair, but to simply give you a chance between doing as I demand, or going to

prison for a long term, with your wife and invalid daughter to keep you company."

Mr. Kane groaned, and he seemed bewildered, while he murmured forth:

"Tell me who you are."

"One who knows you, sir, and all your villainy, and who represents Miss Delia Howard, as her attorney, for she is no longer in the Morris Asylum."

"Now, Mr. Kane, you have played a bold and wicked game for fortune, and your wife has aided and abetted you in it, while your step-daughter, dying as she is, has been influenced to act as one who bears the same name as she does."

"For these crimes you well know you can be most severely punished, so you can either go before the world, in trial, or you can transfer to Miss Howard, the real heiress, whom you have so basely wronged, all of her property, and I will see that you make no mistake."

"Which will you decide to do?"

"Good God! you will beggar me!"

"So be it, for you have deserved it, and you do not own one dollar that is invested in this place, and Captain Gordon here has several of his men near by, who will keep you under their eyes and your wife and step-daughter while you are packing up."

"I will bring Miss Howard here to-night, and you can transfer to her all her inheritance intact, and to-morrow, that there may be no scandal about it, which she wishes to avoid, if you act right, you can depart, carrying your servants with you, and giving the impression that she has purchased the place."

"Now, what do you say?"

"I can do nothing but acquiesce, but I have nothing, I may say, to live on."

"You have been an unfaithful steward, sir, but it is not Miss Howard's desire to drive you out of Eden pennyless, so she will give you ten thousand dollars for your five years' stewardship of the estate, though there is no doubt but that you have gotten your little pickings."

"This money I will pay to you when all papers are signed; but I'll see that you hold back none of the investments, for Miss Howard has a list, sent her by her father, of just what he had at his death, and full particulars."

Lawrence Kane groaned, but asked to go to his wife.

"No, you will see her before us, and your daughter too, so send for them, and we can arrange the papers now, leaving only the signatures to be attached when I bring Miss Howard to-night."

Completely caught, the guilty man could but accept all terms offered, and the next day he was "driven from Eden," along with his wife and daughter, and took a train for the far West, leaving his servants in New York, while Delia Howard, no longer a victim of man's inhumanity, moved into her beautiful home, and Bonhill Rogers became her attorney and agent.

"And how did you know about poor me?" had asked the beautiful girl, when she was settled at Eden.

"It is a mystery that I hope some day to solve; but now all I can tell you, Miss Howard, is that I was acting under anonymous instructions, for my informer I only know as an invisible being, one who signs himself Ivan, the Wizard Detective; but, after what I know of his remarkable secret service work, whoever he may be, I shall henceforth follow his instructions and advice," was the answer of Bonhill Rogers, and, with The Hornet, he was as much in the dark as ever regarding his mysterious informant of the sad fate of Delia Howard.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SECRET COUNCIL.

THERE was one thing that was very certain, and that was the fact that the young lawyer, Bonhill Rogers, the police and the Secret Service League, were under the close espionage of the one who called himself Ivan, the Wizard Detective, and it was a subject of deep annoyance to all concerned in the surveillance.

The lawyer realized the good that this Invisible Detective had done in the case of Delia Howard, and might accomplish in the mysterious disappearance of Maurice Vertner, and he had left no stone unturned to carry out the ideas of the old lady client, that the man had not committed suicide, though he seemed to wish to have it so appear, and he had begun to trace the career, by the machinery of the law, from his boyhood to his departure, of the young man, and it became an interesting study for him.

Still he did not wish to feel that he had an invisible eye always upon him, while the police and Secret Service men were fretting under it, and those who were most interested had called a secret conclave.

Somehow lawyer Rogers connected the mysteries with Percy Gray, the fugitive murderer, and it was to get the views of all upon the subject, that the meeting was held.

There were present Captain Hester, who had been robbed of the box of jewelry, Captain Benedict of the precinct in which the strange tenants of the Haunted Rookery had located, and the sergeant and policemen who had been present at the death, on the pavement at mid-

night, of the "Beautiful Unknown," as she was called.

Two of the most reliable men of the Broadway squad of "giant officers," policemen Michael Kane and Charles Phillips, were taken into confidence in the matter, as their "beats" being at Fourteenth street and University place, and Fifth avenue and Twenty-third street, they had a better opportunity to see the masses and watch for a face resembling that of Percy Gray.

Captain Gordon, Ferret, "Old Gaslight," Jack Boland, "Bull's-Eye," and several other picked detectives were there, and also Bonhill Rogers, the attorney, along with a female detective, who, under the guise of a charitable philanthropist, played the spy on the dwellers in odd localities, and was known in the "profession" as "Charity Kate," though her cards read:

"MRS. KATHLEEN VASSAR,

No. — Lexington Avenue."

Had the metropolis been searched over, a better set of officers and Secret Service people could not have been found, and when Bonhill Rogers glanced over the party as they all congregated in the office of Chief Gordon, he felt that they had certainly all in their favor to solve the strange espionage they were under, and discover the whereabouts of this Invisible Ivan, the detective, and know whether he had aught to do with the fugitive from the gallows, Percy Gray.

The strange meeting was called to order by The Hornet, and the attorney was made chairman, while Charity Kate was appointed secretary.

A strange woman was this one whom her companions called Charity Kate, for she was one with a history.

A kindly face, sad and very lovely, a form well molded and graceful, dressed with exquisite taste, though not wearing even the simplest piece of jewelry, not an ear-ring, ring or pin, she was simply known as one who had come to The Hornet some years before and betrayed an important conspiracy to do a great wrong to innocent persons.

From that day she had been on the pay-roll as a detective, drawing a most liberal salary, all of which, excepting for necessities, she spent in charity, and thus doing good, she got others to subscribe liberally, and their every dollar did this strange woman give to poor, suffering humanity.

But under the guise of charity she worked well, for here a murderer was found out, there a plot to rob discovered, and again a nest of counterfeiters was unearthed, until she became noted for the valuable work she did, and was often spoken of as the "Queen Bee Detective."

Kindly toward all, she yet possessed a dignity that none could break through, and, though unknown to herself, she discovered the skeletons in the closets of others in a manner that amounted to a combination of genius and science in her nature.

Such was the woman selected to be the secretary of the secret conclave.

The meeting having been called to order, the lawyer made a statement regarding its motive, and the belief of The Hornet and himself, that Percy Gray, the escaped murderer, was in some way connected with the invisible personage who signed himself Ivan, the Wizard Detective.

Without giving names, or locality, he spoke of the letter he had received regarding the incarceration in an asylum of Delia Howard, and the successful termination to while Gordon and himself, acting for the Invisible Detective, had brought the matter, while he also referred to a case he then had in hand, gained from the same source.

The murder of the Beautiful Unknown, the escape of the murderer, the visit of Percy Gray to him at his home, the mysterious letters and their delivery, the taking, out of Captain Hester's safe of the box of jewelry, the capture of the girl, disguised as a boy messenger, her escape, the visit of the old lady to his office, the strange tenants of the Haunted Rookery, the threat of the lovely girl to Ferret, all were made known in detail, along with the fact that the murdered girl's identity had not been traced, nor had that of her slayer, while the anchor of flowers placed regularly upon her grave, and the monument to her memory, erected by the "accused," was all a matter of mystery unsolved, not even the florist from whence came the bouquet, or the stone-cutter that furnished the marble having been discovered.

All these things were repeated in detail, and then Bonhill Rogers said:

"Now, with all these mysteries undiscovered, we work wholly in the dark, and the object of this meeting is to let light in upon the strange occurrences, for, with twenty-five thousand dollars' reward upon a man's head, he not only remains at large, but it is strongly suspected is the chief of a Secret Service League that have our own every movement under their eyes."

"It is to start afresh in our work, that we must now do, and we must know, at all hazards, who it is that is the spy upon our movements,

and connect the links together, until we have solved every mystery."

"Beginning with the night of the murder upon — square, we will go over, in detail, each occurrence, that all present may know just what basis there is to work on, and the views of all may be heard, and then we can, armed with facts, suspicions and fancies, unravel the tangled skein in our hands."

Then the stories were told, comments made, suggestions heard, clues acted upon, and the meeting was about to adjourn, flushed with the hope of success, when out of an inner office, believed to be unoccupied, a man strode into the assembly-room.

Instantly every one was afoot, and every eye rested upon the intruder, who advanced slowly toward the center of the room, a letter in his hand, a nervous, haggard look upon his pale face, yet firm resolve to do some act upon his set lips.

CHAPTER XVI.

A CONFESSION OF CRIME.

THE appearance of the stranger, coming from a room in which no one was supposed to be, was fairly startling to those of the secret council, from Chief Gordon down.

To no one was he known, and each one seemed to expect from each other some explanation.

He was a man who had the appearance of having seen better days, for about him was the look of the "shabby-genteel" gentleman.

His clothes were seedy, yet not ill-fitting, and the material was good; his linen was clean, though coarse, and his face was clean-shaven and hair neatly combed.

As though dumb with surprise no one spoke, and he walked to the center of the group, halted, glanced into the face of The Hornet, and asked:

"Are you Chief Gordon, of the Secret Service League?"

The reply was bluntly given, in fact quite emphatic; but it showed The Hornet was surprised:

"I am! Who the blazes are you?"

"This letter will explain, sir," and he handed the letter he carried in his grasp.

"First tell me how you got into that room?"

"Through the outer door, sir."

"When?"

"A minute ago."

"You heard our conversation?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Was the door open?"

"Oh no, sir."

"How did you get in, then?"

"The one who gave me that letter opened it, with a key that he had, and told me I would find you here."

"By Jupiter! but which one of my men has dared do this?" and The Hornet's eyes flashed with anger.

"None of your men did it, sir."

"Who was it, then?"

"The Wizard Detective."

Every one started at this, for it told them, each and all, how untiringly, how skillfully, their steps were dogged by this Invisible Detective.

"Hal! do you know this will-o'-the-wisp, who appears invisible, and acts so boldly?" cried the chief, and all eyes were bent upon the stranger.

"The letter will explain all that I know, sir."

"Ah! you had caused me to forget the letter," and The Hornet glanced at the address, which was:

"To CAPTAIN JAMES GORDON,
The Hornet."

There was a seal upon it, plainly stamped in the wax, and the design was a gallows, encircled by handcuffs linked together.

Breaking the letter open The Hornet read it in silence, and then handing it to Bonhill Rogers, said:

"Please read it aloud."

The bearer stood in silence, pale and with anxious eyes, but stern lips.

The lawyer read aloud:

"It gives me pleasure to present to The Hornet a gentleman who has an important confession to make if he can make terms for his own safety."

"As it is a matter of great importance, I would suggest that you offer him his freedom for his secret."

"With respect,

"IVAN, The Wizard Detective."

"Well, my man, you have a confession to make?" said the chief.

"I have, sir, if I get my terms."

"Ah! what are they?"

"My freedom from arrest, trial and publicity in return for my secret."

"What is your secret worth?"

"A great deal to those I make it known to."

"Mr. Rogers, I turn the gentleman over to you," said The Hornet, stepping to one side, and the lawyer promptly asked:

"Well, sir, what crime are you guilty of?"

"I answer no questions, sir, unless you gentlemen in authority give me your guarantee of personal safety and liberty for my story."

"What do you say, Gordon?"

"I am willing, for he evidently bears some secret, as his face shows it."

"And you, Captain Hester?"

"I give my guarantee."
 "And Captain Benedict?"
 "I side with the others, sir."
 "Well, my man, you are safe, so out with your story," and the lawyer turned to the stranger.

"It is soon told, sir, and to my shame also.
 "Two years ago I was an engraver on steel for a large firm in this city, and taking to cards to add to my support, I lost heavily, and to make it up I extracted money from the safe, with a key of my own manufacture.

"To replace the stolen money, I conceived the idea to get some counterfeits I heard were on sale at a certain place, and going there and examining them, I found that they were miserable specimens, and I so told the man.

"I'll give you ten thousand dollars for better plates," he said, and in my despair I took him at his offer, and thus leagued myself with counterfeiters; but I replaced the stolen money, but becoming negligent I was discharged by my employers.

"Still I did not care, as I could make bogus money so easily; but when I had made the full set of plates, and the band of counterfeiters had them, I saw them become cold toward me, and I was given but a bare pittance to live on.

"One night I heard a plot to get rid of me, and it is arranged to do it this week.

"I knew not what to do, and, in my despair, I thought of suicide, for I dared not let the world know I was guilty of crime, as I believed I had to do by betraying my lawless comrades.

"Last week I went into a gun-shop to buy me a pistol, with which to end my wretched life, and I paid for it in counterfeit money.

"A gentleman was there, and followed me out, for the bill, of twenty dollars, had been given to him to change by the shopman.

"He followed me out, overtook me, and told me flatly that I had passed counterfeit money, and, showing me a badge, he arrested me.

"He called a hack, and drove me to a lower part of the city, where he took me into a place that I could not recall, and putting irons on me and blindfolding me led me a long distance through winding hallways.

"When I had the bandage taken from my eyes I discovered that I was in what appeared to be a vault, and a number of men were there.

"Then I was told by my captor to confess about the counterfeit money or die.

"I then told all, and he sent men out to see if I told the truth, and they came back and reported affairs were just as I had stated, in regard to who lived in the house, and how many there were, though of course they did not see the work-room of the counterfeiters.

"Then, at the demand of my captor, I wrote a note to the leader of the band, telling I had been arrested for drunkenness and striking a policeman, and needed thirty dollars.

"One of the men was sent with the note, and he returned with thirty dollars in bogus bills.

"These my captor took, and I was kept in prison for a few days, and to-day I was brought here by my captor, who told me, if I confessed all to you, that I would be allowed to go free, and perhaps get a part of the reward offered for the arrest of counterfeiters, and with it I would go elsewhere and lead an honest life, unless I could get a position in the Secret Service force with you, for I am confident I could be of great value, as, outside of this band, I have met hundreds of crooks in this city, Philadelphia and other cities.

"Now, gentlemen, I am ready to lead you to the secret retreat of the band to-night; I can show you their hiding-places, and all will be there, for it is a council night with them; but I wish to go disguised, as I would be killed, if recognized, or when any of them gets out of prison, for that is the law of the Money-makers."

"You shall go free, and in disguise, and if all comes out as you say you shall be set at liberty, and have your reward for the capture of the band; but now tell me who was your captor?"

"That I do not know, sir."

"Describe him."

"A man, sir, a great deal resembling that gentleman," and he pointed to Bonhill Rogers.

"though he is not so old, and is very handsome."

"Ah, Rogers, a hit at you, as the inference is that you are not handsome; but it is Percy Gray, I'll wager high," said The Hornet.

"Would he dare go undisguised in this city?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"He will do anything."

"Then this connects Gray certainly with this Invisible Ivan, for this man brings a note from the one signing himself the Wizard Detective."

"It would seem so, and he works into our hands certainly," and turning to the stranger he asked.

"What is your name?"

"That I do not care to have known, sir."

"I see," and The Hornet, police captains and Bonhill Rogers put the man through a severe cross-examination regarding his captor, and where he had been taken; but he did not waver in his story, nor could he tell anything about where he had been taken.

"And that man brought you here?" asked the lawyer.

"No, sir, an old man brought me here, with

long gray beard and hair, and gave me to understand that his name was Ivan."

This was all that could be gotten out of the stranger, and, to test the truth of what he said, it was agreed to make a raid that night upon the Money-makers' retreat, and officers Phillips and Kane took charge of the prisoner until the hour appointed, and then the party set off, with Captain Hester, Chief Gordon, Old Gaslight, Ferret and other detectives and officers forming the party.

Passing into the house with his night-key, the guide, wearing a false beard to avoid recognition, took a second key and placed it into what appeared to be a panel in the wall; but it proved to be a secret door, opening, when unlocked, and revealing a narrow passage that led to a pair of stairs.

These were ascended noiselessly by the men, the guide demanding perfect silence, and they led to another long hallway, at the further end of which were other stairs.

"A remarkable place this," muttered Chief Gordon, who was next to the guide.

"It is a space between two houses, sir, utilized for a secret entrance, and is unknown save to the thirteen men who compose the Money-makers' League, and to one other," explained the guide.

"Who is that one other—yourself?"

"Oh, no, I am one of the thirteen; the other is a woman, the wife of our chief, and we call her the Queen of the Crooks."

"Is she here?"

"She lives here with her husband."

"How far to the rooms?"

"They are on the top floor, and this stairway leads to them."

Ascending the steps to the landing, The Hornet held his bull's-eye lantern while the guide placed his key in the door.

"Now, sir, be ready, for you have desperate men within to meet," he whispered.

"Come, men, be ready to follow quickly on my heels and have your weapons ready for use!" said The Hornet in a low, stern voice, and as he spoke the counterfeiter threw the door wide open with the words:

"Officers, there is your game!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MONEY-MAKERS' LEAGUE.

WHEN the unknown counterfeiter, who had confessed his crime, uttered the words that end the foregoing chapter, he threw the door, he had noiselessly unlocked, wide open, and a strange scene was revealed within.

There were just twelve men in the room, the entire band of counterfeiters with two exceptions.

One of these exceptions was the informer, then with the officers of the law, and disguised, that he might not be recognized by his comrades in sin, as the one who had betrayed them.

He was the "artist" of the League, the one whose talent had produced the fine specimens of bills and bonds on steel, that the others printed and circulated.

There were type stands there for numbering, inks of various colors, paper in large quantities, of the peculiar kind used for bank-notes, presses, stamps and all the implements of a counterfeiter's workshop.

It was a large room, walled in solidly upon four sides, the walls being padded, and the light and air coming from a skylight above, over which iron shades could be drawn.

But one door opened into the shop, and it was a stout one, looking from outside, upon the landing at the head of the stairs, like a solid wall, while to the right of it was a doorway that led to the apartments of the "Counterfeiter King," and his wife, the Queen of the Crooks, she being the other exception to the band who were not there, when the police entered.

It was a group of daring men caught in the act of crime, for they were preparing for the "market" bogus bills.

The informer, their "artist," as they called him, had finished his work, that of engraving the plates, and so that he reported once a week it was sufficient; but he had realized that he was of a fickle nature, and, having gotten from him all that he could serve them in, they wished to get rid of him.

Their safety, their fortunes, were more than his life, and they were discussing the means of getting rid of him when the Hawks of Justice entered.

To "get rid of" an objectionable member of the band meant to put him under ground, or at the bottom of the sea, and lots were to be drawn to see who should do the deadly work.

This band of counterfeiters had defied the police for a long time, and their leader was known as the King of Counterfeiters.

So well-timed had been the informer's visit that all the band were there, as I have said.

The "King" sat at his desk in an easy-chair. A man with a strong face, cunning withal, bold and wicked, he yet had the air of a dashing soldier, rather than a criminal, and he affected army-blue clothing and a military hat, while his penetrating black eyes were hidden beneath eyeglasses.

His men were of a strata below his own, by several degrees.

Shrewd they were, bold and clever workmen in their various departments; but they were not his equal in intelligence or education.

He looked the gentleman and could act it, though in reality he was an escaped convict, in on a life sentence for murder, when he should have been hanged.

But that was long before, and in the far West, and New York knew him only as a man about town.

His friends, outside of his secret workings, not his pals, looked upon him as an ex-army officer, with a liberal income, and though he kept his room at a fashionable hotel, he lived in his secret apartments, found only through secret doors and the unexpected space between the walls of the two buildings, both of which the "Money-makers" owned, and parts of which were rented to honest people who little dreamed of the hidden chamber in the rear attic of one of the buildings, or the luxurious rooms of the chief law-breaker in the other.

The workmen were busy about the room which had padded floors, one at a desk, another setting type, a third counterfeiting signatures, a fourth preparing paper for stamping, and so on.

The rules governing the band were severe in the extreme, the penalty death.

No one suspected treachery then, no one was prepared for defense.

In amazement, in horror, they sprung to their feet, while in thundering tones The Hornet shouted:

"Hands up, all of you!"

The counterfeiters were caged, for they saw a revolver to each man leveled at them, and they knew, if he did not know them, who it was that commanded their surrender.

They glanced at their chief for advice.

If it meant resistance against all odds they must fight.

They saw his keen eyes take in the situation, count his foes, count the revolvers, and heard a second time the command of Chief Gordon:

"Hands up or I fire!"

The counterfeiters still gazed upon their chief, and they saw his hands go slowly up above his head.

Instantly they followed the "King's" example, and up went their hands, while with a skill and celerity attained by long practice, the officers handcuffed the entire party.

"This is certainly a grand success," said Chief Gordon, as the men were secured, and he looked around at the results of the capture.

Then he added:

"But where is our man?"

No one knew, and search for him revealed the fact that he had disappeared.

No one had seen him depart, he had last been observed when he threw open the door into the Money-makers' shop, and then he had disappeared.

Why he had gone the officers could not fathom, and, not wishing to give the counterfeiters an idea of who it was that had betrayed their secret, The Hornet signaled for silence on the subject, and said:

"Now, men, come with your prisoners to the station-house while Captain Hester will look after the booty here, and the tools."

As Chief Gordon turned toward the door, a form suddenly glided into it, and a pistol was leveled at his head, while there came the startling words:

"Release that man, or you shall die!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE QUEEN OF THE "CROOKS."

JAMES GORDON had been in many situations of extreme peril; but always calm, cool as an icicle, and possessed of both nerve and courage of a rare order, he got out of his danger with flying colors.

But upon the present occasion he was confronted very unexpectedly, at a time when he did not anticipate danger, with his men near, and by one whom he could not fire upon.

That one was a woman.

Her form was tall and willowy in movement, and she was attired in a black velvet dress, heavily trimmed with black beads, that gave her an imperial look.

Her face was brilliant, rather than beautiful, and her eyes, radiant, expressive, and when her nature was aroused, dangerous.

She wore diamond pendants in her ears, and rubies, emeralds and diamonds glittered on the hand that held the threatening revolver.

She had glided into the doorway, evidently coming from the door that led to the Counterfeiter King's apartment.

She fairly glared into the face of The Hornet, and there was the quiver of a nerve in the hand that held the pistol in Gordon's face.

"Who are you?" he asked calmly, while he warned his men back as they started toward the woman.

"I am that man's wife, and if you do not release him, as I demand, you have a desperate woman to deal with."

"It is your misfortune, madam, to be allied to a great villain," said The Hornet.

"Do not dare throw my misfortunes in my teeth, for do I not know them only too well?"

"I know he was true, good, noble when I married him; but his money was lost, and he took desperate chances to get more."

"He got gold, and now you know how; but he has been a generous, true husband to me, and you shall not drag him to prison, for it would be better did you kill him."

"I feel sorry for you, madam, on account of your love for this man, as well as for your own sake, for you also are my prisoner."

"Never! I would kill you, kill him and then take my own life first," she said savagely.

Chief Gordon saw that he had a desperate woman to deal with.

A spark might explode a deadly magazine.

With her outlaw husband she too was guilty, for she knew his evil life, lived on his ill-gotten gains, and doubtless circulated much of the bogus money.

She would kill him, and yet to disarm her was something that puzzled him, and his men were silent, watchful, and knew not what to do.

Captain Hester was there, yet what could he do, when the touch of a trigger meant the death of the detective chief, for that the woman intended to do all she said there was no room for doubt.

Gordon meanwhile never flinched, but he watched the woman with a glance that took in her every movement.

At last he determined to try a plan to break down her deadly intent, and he said, without taking his eyes off of her face:

"Can you not tell your wife of the madness of her act, and that what she does goes that much more against you and her also?"

He addressed the Counterfeiter King, and the latter smiled grimly and said:

"Death is preferable to a long life in prison, which will be her fate as well as mine and of my men, so if she can release me by a compromise on you, I am glad; but if not, she can shoot if she deems best, and both you and I may be assured of sudden death, for she is a dead shot."

"Let my husband be unhandcuffed, pass out of that door and escape, and I spare you."

"If you refuse, I fire, first at you, then at him, then send a bullet into my own heart."

"Which shall it be?"

The woman meant every word she uttered, and James Gordon stood on the brink of a grave, for there was no man there who would fire upon her.

What to do no one knew, no one could suggest, and the woman was mistress of the situation, and the counterfeiters realized it and laughed.

With their king at liberty, their confidence in him suggested escape for them.

"I am growing impatient, so answer quick," she said.

"My answer is that I will not yield my prisoner," said Gordon, firmly.

"Hold!" cried Captain Hester, as he saw by the woman's look that she intended to fire.

"Well, sir?"

But she kept her eyes upon The Hornet.

"Surrender your weapon, or woman that you are, I fire upon you."

"Captain Hester, I know you, and nothing would tempt you to fire on a woman to save even your own life, so that will not do and Chief Gordon dies."

Again the deadly light flashed in her eyes and her finger touched the trigger; but at the same instant her hand was struck up, the bullet crashed through the ceiling, a clicking sound was heard and the woman was disarmed and in irons in a second's time.

"Chief Gordon, that was a close call for you," said a ringing voice.

And a cry of amazement broke from the lips of several of the officers present, for they recognized the fugitive murderer, Percy Gray!

CHAPTER XIX.

A FRUITLESS SEARCH.

THE threat of the woman, the silent dismay following it, the striking up of her arm, explosion of the pistol, the click of the handcuffs, a shriek when she felt that she was foiled, and the words of the fugitive whom several had recognized, was all but an instant's work, and the strange rescuer of the detective chief from death, the foiler of a tragedy that was on the verge of happening, was gone.

Bounding toward the door Chief Gordon glanced down the stairs.

"A lantern here!" he shouted.

Old Bull's Eye* was at his side in an instant, and the rays of his bull's-eye lantern shot down the narrow stairway; but the fugitive was not to be seen.

Certain it was that he could not have gone that way.

The Queen of the Crooks heard this assertion from Detective Clapp, and she started, stopped her tears of mortification at being foiled, min-

gled with grief at her capture and that of her husband, and said:

"There is but one other way he can escape."

"How?" asked The Hornet.

"Through my rooms; quick, after him, for he must not escape, for I wish to be avenged upon him."

Independent of this desire, the police and detectives sought to find the man, for all knew that his head was worth twenty-five thousand dollars.

"Here is my key—in my pocket," cried the woman, trying to get her iron-bound hand into her pocket.

With a celerity that was surprising in a man finding the pocket of a woman's dress, Gordon found the key, and springing to the door, asked:

"If locked, how did he get in here?"

"How did he get into the secret passage-way?" inquired Captain Hester, as he followed The Hornet and Bull's Eye into the apartments of the counterfeiter king and his wife.

There were two rooms, handsomely furnished, one as a sitting-room, the other as a sleeping chamber, and there was about their furnishing an air of taste and refinement that was unlooked for in the apartments of a "crook" and his wife.

The woman had followed the chief and police captain into the rooms, Bull's Eye keeping close by her side, and she gazed at them anxiously as they searched the apartments.

"He is not here; he could not have come this way," said Captain Hester.

"He did come this way," the woman remarked.

"Ah! you knew him, then, and all about him?"

"No, I never saw him in my life before just now; but I may as well tell the secret, for I am going to prison and it will be found out."

"You have a secret to tell?"

"Yes, and how that man knew it I cannot tell, for I believed that only Lawton and myself knew it, other than the one who made it."

"Lawton is your husband?"

"Yes."

"What is his full name?"

"Lawton Leslie."

"This is an alias."

"Then find out his real name," was the reply.

"And yours?"

"Ella Leslie."

"And your maiden name?"

"That you have nothing to do with."

"But the secret?" and Captain Hester returned to the subject of the fugitive's escape.

"Do you see that grate?" and she pointed to the fireplace.

"Yes."

"Do you not observe that one end is out from the side of the mantle?"

"Ah, yes," and giving it a pull the grate swung out on hinges, showing that a space was behind several feet in size, and with a ladder leading up the chimney.

"Ha! he has gone this way," said Captain Hester, with disgust.

"Yes, to the roof, and along it to a fire-escape, and thence into an alleyway."

"You need not look for him, but how he came in possession of the secret I know not."

"You came out of your room, when you entered the other room?"

"I did."

"He was not here then?"

"Oh no."

"Then he knew the secret entrance, as he did that in your room, entered with keys, for some reason known to himself, opened your door and so escaped."

"He saved me from your shot, but I must still hunt him down," remarked Gordon.

"He is the man who took the life of that beautiful unknown girl some time ago?" the woman asked.

"He is."

"And escaped so cleverly from prison?"

"Yes."

"I admire his nerve and cleverness; but I do not understand how he knew of this secret. But what are you to do with me?"

"I shall go with Captain Hester to the Superintendent of Police and consult as to the disposal of you and your companions, for we do not care to take you through the streets, late as it is; but we will leave a guard here until our return."

"I am a woman, so release me, and take the men."

"You have placed yourself out of the pale of womanhood in leaguering with counterfeiters and must take your chance with the others," sternly said The Hornet.

"I will be allowed to pack up my things?"

"Certainly, under the eye of an officer."

"So be it; let me begin now, and if I can be put in the same cell with my husband, be good enough to permit it."

"I will do all that I can for you," and calling Ferret, Chief Gordon bade him guard the woman, allowing her to pack up her clothing, but to touch no papers in the desk in the room.

"I will send Old Gaslight to help you, and watch her as you would a tigress, for she can

have her irons taken off, and may attack you with some weapon."

"I'll keep an eye on her, sir, never fear," responded Ferret, and Chief Gordon and Captain Hester left the room, returning to the counterfeiters' workshop.

Leaving several officers with the heavily-ironed prisoners, Gordon and Captain Hester, accompanied by the remainder of their men, departed for Police Head-quarters to report their valuable capture and consult as to what was to be done with the thirteen prisoners.

They were annoyed at the disappearance of the informer and guide, for they could not account for it, and they were mystified at the disappearance of the fugitive murderer, Percy Gray, his quick act in disarming the woman, and then almost weirdlike disappearance, and they wished to submit all the facts to the Chief of the Police.

CHAPTER XX.

A CLEVER ESCAPE.

SILENT and grim, his hands ironed behind him, the Counterfeiter King paced to and fro in the padded workshop, where he had so long and successfully held the law at bay.

He felt that a sentence, to the full limit of justice was certain, and so he let that pass as a settled fact, and at once began to plot the ways and means of escape, after the walls of a prison had closed behind him.

His men were of a different stripe, as I have said, and settled down into a sullen humor, which had the aspect of despair almost.

They had taken the chances in their crimes, and when the exposure came they had not the nerve to meet the first shock with calm courage, whatever dogged defiance they might settle into afterward.

So they sat moping and in silence, while their chief paced to and fro.

Once or twice the "King" glanced at his men in a thoughtful, reading-their-faces way, and then cast a quick look at the officers, as though he was thinking of the chances twelve men in irons would have against three officers armed.

His decision was against the risk, though he did not doubt but that his call would arouse his men to action and a break for liberty.

"If they were other officers I might risk it," he muttered, "but those two policemen, Charles Phillips and Michael Kane, I know well; they are giants in courage as well as in strength and form."

"It would not do, while Henry Moore, the detective, who is their ally, is one of the bravest men in the Secret Service corps."

"I know them all, though they little dreamed that I was the King of Counterfeiters."

"Ah! that engraver is alone the one who escapes capture."

"Can he not save us?"

"No, not for though a master in his art, his heart was not in it, and he would be rather glad to see us captured."

"By Heaven! but can he have been the one who betrayed us?"

"No, I guess not, and yet some one did, else how did the law hounds track us?"

"Some man disappeared mysteriously after guiding them here, for I learned that much from their words, and another mystery is that murderer appearing, thwarting the shot of Ella at Gordon, and then dashing into our rooms, for he did not go down stairs."

"I am unable to solve all this mystery: but I must. Oh! they have come to put us behind the iron bars," and he glanced toward two policemen who ascended the steps and entered the room.

"Is Detective Ferret here?" one of them asked, looking about him, and holding out a paper in his hand.

"He is in the next room, sir," said officer Phillips, stepping to the door and showing him the way.

The two officers entered the apartments of the woman, and walking up to Ferret, the one who had before spoken said pleasantly:

"Good-evening, Detective Ferret; I am sent to give you this letter from Chief Gordon, and take charge of the lady, for we have a carriage at the door."

Ferret nodded at the officers, and taking the letter opened the envelope and read:

"Detective Ferret will turn over to the keeping of Special Officer Barrett and companion, the woman, Ella Leslie, alias Queen of the Counterfeiters, as they are to bring her here to head-quarters, and you and your assistant will remain with the male prisoners until you get orders to take them to prison."

JAMES GORDON,
Chief S. S. League."

"Are you officer Barrett?" asked Ferret.

"I am."

"I do not recall your face."

"I have been off on special duty, sir, for the superintendent."

"Is that the lady?"

"Yes; but is Chief Gordon at head-quarters?"

"Yes, sir, he wrote that letter there."

"So I see by the heading; but there is the woman, and I advise you to put the bracelets on

* Samuel Clapp, one of the best Secret Service men in the United States, and now principal of a Detective Bureau in New York.—THE AUTHOR.

her, as she may give you trouble, for she's a daring one."

"I'll do so, to be sure, for I wish no struggle with her."

"Come, madam, you must go with me," and officer Barrett turned toward the woman, who had been busy packing up her things.

"Am I to take my things?"

"They will be sent to you, when it is decided where you go, madam."

"Where are you to take me?"

"To the office of superintendent or police."

"Can I bid my husband good-by?"

"Certainly."

She threw on her bonnet and wrap, took up a small hand-sachel and stepped to the door of the room where her husband and his men were.

"Lawton, farewell, and, men, keep up a stout heart," she said.

Then she threw her arms about the neck of the King, and for a moment stood thus.

"Come, madam, you must not delay me," said Officer Barrett, and she at once followed him, her husband, pale but calm and cynical, faced gazing after her as she disappeared down the steps.

"Put on the bracelets," called out Ferret after officer Barrett, and the suggestion was at once acted upon, the woman begging piteously the while to be allowed to remain unmanacled.

"Are two men afraid of one woman?" she asked with a tone of contempt.

"Yes, we are," was the frank reply.

"I am more afraid of one little woman than of half a dozen big men," he added, and the woman laughed, a bright laugh of mingled amusement and defiance.

Going down the secret way, the officers led their captive out into the street where a carriage awaited them.

The streets were deserted at that late hour, not even the tenants in the houses having been aroused, so noiselessly had the raid been conducted, and the wheels of the vehicle caused many an echo as it rolled rapidly away over the stones.

"Too fast, driver!" shouted one of a group of men in uniform who turned a corner, stepping out into the street and stopping the horses.

"It's all right, Captain Hester, I have a prisoner here for Captain Benedict," said officer Barrett, looking out of the window.

"All right, sir; go ahead, driver."

And Captain Hester stepped back upon the pavement and joined Chief Gordon and several others who formed the group.

"Some police officer with a prisoner for Benedict," he said, as he walked on.

And soon after they arrived at the door leading to the counterfeiters' den.

One of his men stood there and they entered, ascending the stairs rapidly.

"Officer Phillips, those men go to the Tombs, and at once, and the woman— Ah, Ferret, who is with the woman?" asked Captain Hester, with surprise, as he saw the detective and Old Gaslight in the room with the male prisoners.

"The woman, sir?"

"Yes; where is she?"

"Why, I sent her with the officers to headquarters, according to the orders from my chief there."

"Orders from me, Ferret?" asked Gordon, with surprise.

"Yes, sir."

"I gave no such orders."

"You sent a letter, and here it is, sir."

As Ferret spoke he took from his pocket the letter and handed it to his chief.

"Who gave you this?" asked The Hornet, his face growing white.

"Officer Barrett, sir."

"Who is officer Barrett?"

"A special, he said, at head-quarters."

"Ferret, this certainly looks like my handwriting, and it is written on head-quarters letter-paper, but you have been deceived, and the woman has escaped!" said Gordon, impressively.

A shout came from the lips of the Counterfeiter King, his men broke out in a cheer, and Captain Hester cried:

"There were two policemen, or men who professed to be?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did they have a carriage?"

"They said so, sir."

"By Heaven! they passed us in the street!"

"Gordon, we have been most cleverly taken in!"

And at his words Lawton Leslie, the Counterfeiter, broke forth in a ringing laugh, full of triumph at the escape of the Queen of the Crooks.

CHAPTER XXI.

INVISIBLE IVAN HEARD FROM.

It is a bitter blow to the police and the Secret Service fraternity to be outwitted at their own game, as it were, as that is to "have to take their own medicine," to use the parlance of the street, and Captain Hester, Chief Gordon and all felt keenly the gibes of the Counterfeiter King at the escape of his Queen.

They had seen the superintendent, been con-

gratulated upon their grand success, talked over the mysterious manner of their discovery of the illegal workshop, and the strange disappearance of their informer, with the rescue of the detective chief by the fugitive murderer, and then started upon their return to see the prisoners safely jailed, when they found that they had been cleverly tricked.

By whom they could not guess.

Blame Ferret! The Hornet could not, for there was seemingly his letter, and such a clever forgery that he was himself staggered at the resemblance to his writing and signature.

Also, it seemed but natural that Ferret, and all with him, should suspect no harm, when two officers in uniform came, bearing a letter for the Queen of the Crooks.

Every police officer in New York was by no means known by sight to the detectives, and these two seemed to be strangers; but it made Ferret determine to get acquainted with the face of every man on the force.

"I'll spend a few days making acquaintance with those I do not know, so as not to be tricked this way again," he said to his chief.

As there was nothing to do but submit to it, officers Parker and Mocksley were left in charge of the counterfeiters' den and the "Queen's" apartments, and the prisoners were hurried off to jail under the escort of the detectives and police, while Captain Hester and The Hornet started out to their respective offices to set the machinery of the law going to capture the escaped woman and her rescuer, if possible.

Upon entering his private office, and turning up the drop-light upon his desk, Chief Gordon saw that it was two o'clock.

There was a man occupying a room near, whose duty it was to remain up until one o'clock when he could retire, but a bell at the head of his bed aroused him if aught was needed, and he could call up the detectives who roomed near.

This man had retired, and all was quiet in the office, so that the chief pulled the bell-rope to arouse the attendant and send out his entire force, which were to be put at once on the work of tracking the carriage with the escaped Counterfeit Queen.

As he threw himself into his chair he observed a note on his desk addressed to him.

At a glance he recognized the handwriting, as he had several times seen it before.

He hastily opened the envelope, and written on his office paper was a communication that surprised him.

It read:

"CHIEF GORDON:—

"DEAR SIR:—I dropped in, as all was quiet, to explain why it was the woman, known as the Queen of the Crooks, was allowed to escape to night, and to say that it is utterly useless for you to attempt to find her."

Here the attendant entered, and Chief Gordon said sternly:

"Maxwell, who left this letter for me?"

"I know of no letter having been left for you, sir."

"Have you been here all the evening?"

"Yes, sir, until one o'clock."

"And no one came to see me?"

"No, sir, none but the men dropping in to report up to twelve o'clock."

"Yet I find this letter upon my desk."

"I do not know about it, chief, for it was not there when I retired, as I arranged the desk myself."

"Maxwell?"

"Sir?"

"We have a spy on us, and he has a key to my outer and inner office, for last night he let a man in through that other room, a door that is seldom used, as you know."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, I wish you to go, first thing in the morning, and have every lock changed, and get those that are the most difficult to open."

"Have combination locks placed on my desk and lock-closets."

"Yes, sir."

"Also, I wish a man to be constantly on duty in that room and out of sight, so arrange a curtain for him to remain behind."

"Yes, sir."

"Now, go and call up the entire force."

"Yes, sir," and Maxwell departed, while The Hornet resumed the reading of his letter where he had left off:

"I gave you the secret of the counterfeiters' den, through one who led you truly, but then deemed it best to retire, and he must have full written pardon before he can be found, so kindly get such for him, as he did his work well and kept his pledge, and mail it simply to

"INVISIBLE IVAN,

General Delivery,

New York City,"

and he will receive it.

"As for the woman, Ella Leslie, I set her free, through a plan that worked well, as I did not mean that she should be captured, nor did I expect it."

"She unfortunately for herself, entered the den, and was taken, and but for the appearance of one whom you do the steps of day and night, you would have been shot by her."

"I have sifted the entire matter regarding the woman, and she has done no wrong."

"She has been guilty of no crime, never passed a dollar of counterfeit money in her life and has begged her husband to change from his evil ways."

"She loved the man with her whole soul, and married him, and even remained loyal when she discovered just what he was."

"She has clung to him, hoping to redeem him, and she had his pledge to give up this life after his next issue and disposal of bogus bills."

"That she might not encourage him in his evil deeds, she refused to accept any present purchased by his crime-stained money, living on an income she possessed of her own."

"Knowing this as I do, and that she would suffer when guiltless and particularly so through her resistance, I at once determined to free her, and did so, she being wholly ignorant that she was in the hands of rescuers when she left her room."

"As the 'informer' does not wish the reward for his work in the capture of the counterfeiters, divide it among those who made the arrest, and oblige,

"Sincerely yours,

"IVAN, THE INVISIBLE."

"Well, I have the name of being a good detective, and having the best men under me; but this Wizard of the Secret Service is beyond my finding out, for he aids me, foils me, and keeps unknown."

"Still, I do not give up the puzzle, and shall solve it in time; but he wrote this letter right here at my desk, had a man to guide me to the counterfeiters' den, others to rescue that woman, and that fugitive murderer, Percy Gray, was on hand to save my life, so there is certainly a link between him and this Invisible Ivan, who so coolly lets himself into my private office, and with my pen, ink and paper writes me what he has done, and gives his reasons."

"Well, well, I must not be outwitted— Ah! here come my men, and that carriage must be found," and The Hornet turned to greet several of his Secret Service men who just then entered, ready for work, whatever it might be that was expected of them.

In an hour over a hundred men, detectives and police, were spread over the city on the search for the carriage that had contained the escaped Queen of the Crooks and pretended officer of the law who had so boldly rescued her from the clutches of her captors.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRANGE VISITOR.

WHEN the unfortunate victim of Lawrence Kane's perfidy, moved into her own grand home, of which she was sole mistress, her heart was full of joy.

"I am indeed transferred to Eden," she said, when she compared the lovely scenery, the ornamental grounds, fine view of the sound, and the lordly mansion, superbly furnished and supplied with luxury, to the gloomy asylum in which she had been incarcerated by her guardian.

She had asked the handsome young lawyer, Bonhill Rogers, again and again to tell her how it all came about, and she gave to him the uneventful history of her young life, up to the time she had been taken to the madhouse.

"In vain I pleaded, in vain I told my keepers that I was not what those people represented me, that I was not their child, for they said it was my peculiar mania, and they would not believe me."

"I believe, Mr. Rogers, had I been much longer in those dim walls I would really have gone mad, or died," said the poor girl, after she was in her own home, and the lawyer had run up to Eden to dine with her one Sunday.

He had carefully gone over her entire inheritance, examined all of the investments made by the cunning guardian, and showed to her just what she was worth, and how much income she would have each year.

"Why, I can live extravagantly, and yet have a great deal to devote to charity, Mr. Rogers, so you must tell me where I can do good," she said, when she glanced over the papers.

"I wish you also to arrange all my business matters for me, for I place everything in your hands."

"This is a great trust, Miss Howard, and I wish you to be your own manager, for it will give you plenty to think of and to do."

"I would keep up the same number of servants at Eden, for you will need them, and living alone as you do, it will be best."

"I will also have some of my friends call on you, so that, amid new associations and friends, you can forget the bitterness of the past," and Bonhill Rogers drove away from Eden, promising to come once a week, and more deeply interested in the lovely girl than he cared to admit even to himself.

"She is very beautiful, and very fascinating."

"I am so glad she has been saved from a life of misery through me, though who that mysterious underworker is, he who gave me the information regarding her, I cannot find out," and the young lawyer gave the coachman, who drove him to the railroad station, a liberal fee, as he said:

"Lennox, keep an eye to Miss Howard's interests, and I'll not forget you, and see that the servants do not impose upon her."

"I will, thank you, sir," answered Lennox, and as he drove back and looked at his generous fee, he said:

"I hope he'll some day be master at the mansion, and maybe he will, for he's a fine gentleman."

"Mr. Rogers caught the train, Lennox?" said Delia Howard, as she saw the carriage return empty.

"Yes, miss, and with a few minutes to spare," answered Lennox, as he drove around to the stables, while the fair mistress of Eden walked on down toward the little pier and boat-house upon the shores of the Sound, to which the lawn sloped.

She looked very beautiful in her well-fitting silk dress and a heavy scarf about her shoulders as she stood on the dock glancing out over the sunlit waters, looking drear and cold under the wintry sky.

After standing a few moments in silence, she retraced her way to the mansion just as the sun went down and darkness fell upon land and water.

A cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth in the library, and sitting down in a chair fronting it she took up a book to read, but was soon disturbed by the entrance of a butler who brought word that a gentleman desired to see her.

"A gentleman, Loudon?" asked Miss Howard of the dignified butler.

"Yes, miss; and he gave me no card."

"Ask him in; but who he is I cannot understand," she said.

A moment after the visitor entered, and his appearance at once attracted the attention of the maiden, for he was one to command attention everywhere.

"Miss Howard, I believe?" he said, in a courtly way.

"Yes, sir; be seated, please."

"Permit me to introduce myself, Miss Howard, not as one who seeks your acquaintance socially, but in a business way, for I am a detective."

"A detective, sir, and to see me?"

"Be not alarmed, Miss Howard, for I come to serve you, as Mr. Rogers would do were he here, only I did not arrive in time to see him ere he took the train for the city."

"Yes; he left an hour ago, sir."

"And I passed him as I came out; but to explain: Miss Howard, permit me to prove myself worthy of your confidence by saying that both Chief Gordon and Mr. Rogers I serve and know your history; and, having been on the watch to prevent harm befalling you, I have discovered a little plot against you."

"Indeed! will my sorrows never cease?"

And Delia Howard turned slightly pale.

"Oh, yes; after to-night I hope there will be no more trouble; but just now the plotter is your former guardian, Mr. Lawrence Kane, and he meditates mischief."

"Oh, how I dread that man!"

"Do not be disturbed, Miss Howard, for he is harmless; but may I ask if you have a servant in your employ by the name of Henderson?"

"Yes, sir, he is the butler's assistant."

"You got him with the rest of the servants?"

"Yes, through lawyer Rogers."

"Lawyer Rogers was deceived in that man, for he is the spy of Lawrence Kane."

"Can this be true, sir?"

"So true, Miss Howard, that to-night at midnight he is to open your front door and admit a man who is none other than your guardian."

"They are to go to your room, place you under the influence of chloroform, rob you of your jewelry and money, carry you to a sloop waiting off-shore, and you will be held prisoner until you give a check for the amount of money on deposit with your bankers, which amounts, I believe, to nearly sixty thousand dollars."

"So he will demand, and after getting it I fear he would not be willing to compromise himself by allowing you to go free."

"To thwart him, Miss Howard, I wish you to do me a favor."

"Oh, sir, anything within my power," and the tears came into the beautiful eyes.

"It is that I shall take my leave and drive off in the carriage awaiting me."

"Then I will return on foot, and you must let me into the house, and I will go up to your room."

"You with your maid can take another room facing the Sound shore, and as it is a clear night you can see the sloop run in and a boat land, your guardian then coming toward the house."

"You must let me arrange all then, and I promise you that neither your former guardian or the man Henderson will again trouble you."

"Oh, sir, how much I owe to you in gratitude."

"You owe me nothing yet, but I hope to save you trouble and inconvenience."

"Name any sum I can pay you in—"

"Miss Howard, I am not serving you for pay, I assure you, so pray do not speak of money with me."

"Pardon me, but I did not know how to repay you for all you are doing in my behalf, sir."

"I am amply repaid, Miss Howard, in the work I am now engaged in; but I must depart now, and in a couple of hours I will return and tap gently on the glass vorder."

"Then please let me in," and the strange visi-

tor took his leave, while Delia sought her maid and told her just what she had heard, and the two patiently waited for the coming of the detective.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A DETECTIVE AT WORK.

THE wind howled mournfully without, and the fire's warm glow within doors was very pleasant to be near, and Delia Howard and her maid sat alone in the library awaiting.

A step came in the hall, and, as her mistress had directed, Lizette sprung quickly to shelter behind the heavy *portières* hanging over the bay window.

It was Henderson, and he said apologetically:

"Beg pardon, miss, but I thought you had retired, and I was going to close up."

"No, I will put the lights out myself, or have Lizette do it, so you need not wait up; but where is Loudon?"

"He had a call up to the village this evening."

"Very well, Henderson, you can go to bed."

"Thank you, miss," and the man retired, and Lizette came out of her hiding-place.

Half an hour after a light tap came upon the window-pane, and not knowing but that Henderson might be watching from somewhere in the house, the sash was raised and the detective stepped in.

Delia motioned silence, the lights were put out and the three ascended the stairs in silence and the detective was ushered into the delightful rooms that comprised the maiden's living suite.

He quickly took up a position, from which to act, and then said:

"Please send your maid for the man Henderson."

"Let her say you have some orders to give for the morning."

The maid departed and soon returned with word that Henderson's door was wide open, and he had not retired, and that he had been standing at his window overlooking the Sound.

A moment after there came a knock upon the door, and at a nod from the detective Delia said:

"Come in."

The man entered, and, as he did so he felt a grip upon his shoulder and a revolver looked into his eyes.

"Hold out your hands, sir!" sternly said the detective.

Henderson obeyed, while his face became livid, and his hand trembled violently.

Instantly the steel handcuffs were snapped upon his wrists, and the detective said:

"Now, Henry Anderson, *alias* Henderson, what signal have you with Mr. Kane to-night, from your window, to show that he can approach?"

The man was silent, and the detective continued:

"If you do not speak, sir, I promise you I will force it from you."

"Answer me!"

"My light in the window," was the sullen reply.

"Was he to approach the house alone?"

"Yes."

"And you were to watch for his coming and let him in?"

"Yes."

"I'll save you that trouble, my man."

"Come with me; and Lizette, please show me where this man's room is, and bring me a rope to tie him with."

"Come, sir."

The prisoner walked out of the room with the detective, and was taken to the servants' wing, where he was securely bound and gagged that he might give no alarm.

Then the detective placed the lamp in the window that overlooked the Sound, and returned to Delia's apartments.

"Miss Howard, you need not let me drive you from your room, for I will await Mr. Kane's coming down-stairs," he said.

Then he went down to the front door, opened it and stood outside, cold though it was, while Delia and her maid waited up-stairs.

Excepting the light that shone from the room up-stairs as a signal, the entire mansion was in darkness; but out upon the Sound, a short distance from the shore, the detective saw a small sloop at anchor, and he knew that it was not there when he had entered the house.

Soon after he saw a form approaching slowly toward the house, and he stepped within the door and left it slightly ajar.

A few moments after the man ascended the steps, and crossing the piazza on tip-toe, approached the door, which swung open and in a whisper came the words:

"Come in!"

The midnight visitor stepped in the dark hallway, and the detective whispered:

"All goes well."

"I am glad to hear it, and we will go up at once and chloroform the girl."

"One minute, please."

"Well?"

At that instant a bull's-eye lantern flashed in the face of the man, and a revolver was thrust against his temple, while the detective said, sternly:

"Lawrence Kane, you are a prisoner, and resistance will cause your death!"

"Great God! you are not my man Henderson?" groaned the guilty man.

"I have him safely ironed, as I will you."

"Hold out your hands, sir!"

"Never, I will—"

"Hold! move a muscle and I'll kill you!"

The voice indicated that the speaker meant what he said, and the irons were slipped upon the unresisting hands, which were forced behind the man's back, the better to secure him.

"Lizette!" called out the detective.

"Yes, sir," came from the head of the stairs.

"Light the gas, please, and then guard this prisoner, while I go up after his comrade."

The maid soon had the gas lighted, and it revealed the face and form of Lawrence Kane.

He had carried a sachel, which contained a large bottle of chloroform, a rope, a bag of vast proportions, doubtless for plunder, a pistol, a mask and a dark-lantern.

"Mr. Kane, you were let off in your guilty acts to defraud Miss Howard, when you should have gone to prison; but this time you may not be so fortunate, as you can be sent up for a housebreaker, and upon other charges."

"Now, sir, this girl will guard you while I bring your pal to keep you company."

"If he attempts to escape, Lizette, shoot him," said the detective, and he ascended the stairs, where he was met by Delia.

"Oh, sir, it is indeed my false guardian."

"I did not believe him as bad as this," she said.

"He is a bad man, Miss Howard, but I do not believe will worry you any more when I have done with him."

"It is perhaps better to let Lizette call the other servants, that they may understand that a burglary was attempted, and that Henderson was a spy in your house, and the ally of robbers."

"I will call them, sir," and as soon as Henderson had been removed from his room, by the detective, she called to the other servants, who hastily dressed, in great alarm and surprise, to see what was going on.

"You then are not a traitor, as I supposed?" said Lawrence Kane, as he saw Henderson brought down-stairs by the detective.

"No, but I thought you had told on me," said the man.

"You are a precious pair, and the sooner I get you in safe-keeping the better."

"Miss Howard, I think you can retire now, without fear of further disturbance, and you may rest assured that your home shall be well guarded when those who would harm you little dream they are watched."

"How much I thank you, sir; but you certainly will not depart to-night?"

"Oh yes."

"You will let me send you, then, to the village?"

"No, for we will go in the vessel which this gentleman has so kindly provided for us."

"I will let Mr. Rogers know just what occurred, and he will doubtless soon be up to see you."

"You will certainly give me your name, that I may know to whom I am indebted for such a service as you have rendered to-night?" and Delia Howard held out her hand to the detective, who answered:

"Those who do not know me, Miss Howard, call me Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective."

"Good-night."

And he led his prisoners away, while the maiden said aloud and earnestly:

"That is the man of whom lawyer Rogers spoke, and to him, mysterious being that he is, I owe my escape from that madhouse."

"How strangely he watches over me, and who can he be?"

Watching the detective and his prisoners, the maiden and Lizette stood at the library window and beheld the little sloop set sail and depart, while a man's form left the shore, crossed the lawn and disappeared down the driveway leading to the road.

That man was the detective, and he walked rapidly along over the frozen ground, enveloped in a heavy cloak.

A walk of fifteen minutes brought him to the station, and the midnight train dashed up as he reached it and he sprung on board.

Set down in New York, he took a hack and drove a number of blocks, when he alighted, paid the driver and walked to the front of a handsome brown-stone house.

Ascending the massive steps, he put a night-key in the door, opened it, and passed within out of sight.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE TWO LETTERS.

LAWYER BONNILL ROGERS came down to a late breakfast, the morning following the scenes related as occurring at Eden Mansion on the Sound.

He had been up until a late hour, in consultation with Chief Gordon, who had not, with the aid of Captain Hester, been able to find any clew to those who had taken the Queen of the

Crooks from the charge of Ferret the Detective.

The letter found on the desk of The Hornet had been coned over, and it proved conclusively that the Wizard Detective had written it at the desk of the chief to whom it was addressed.

The instructions of The Hornet, regarding the locks, had been carried out during the day, and workmen had placed upon the doors and desks new ones of an odd pattern that could not be readily duplicated.

A man had already been detailed for duty, as soon as darkness came on, and there had been a curtain arranged behind which he could sit and view the room, while he remained unseen.

An arrangement was also made, so that he could pull a wire, from where he sat, and it would give an alarm in the dormitory where four detectives slept, to be constantly ready for duty and they were to at once hasten to the two outer doors of the offices, to be ready to capture any one who might be within.

Having seen the plans of Chief Gordon to entrap this mysterious detective, and talked over plots on hand, Bonhill Rogers took his departure for his home.

It was Sunday night, and, as I have said, very late when he went to his bedroom to retire, and consequently he arose at a later hour the following morning.

Mr. Rogers was a man who took life easily, and did not worry about business out of hours, so he left his mail to read after his breakfast had been dispatched, and took his morning papers in to the table with him.

Then he strolled leisurely into his library, dropped into his easy-chair, a cigar between his lips, and took up his mail, consisting of half a dozen letters, and some periodicals which he had addressed to his home for comfortable reading.

There was a letter from Delia Howard, and it had arrived while he was at breakfast.

He seemed surprised to recognize the handwriting of the heiress, but not displeased, and hastily broke the seal with the remark:

"It is about something she forgot to tell me of, doubtless, bless her sweet little heart."

But he started when he had read the first line, for it was dated:

"EDEN, Midnight,"

and was a closely-written letter of several pages.

His eyes opened as he read the words:

"I write this before I sleep, and send it to the station to catch the first mail down at six o'clock in the morning."

Then followed the story of the Wizard Detective's visit, the story he told, and what had followed, ending with:

"I supposed through all that the detective was serving you, or acting for you, until the end I asked his name and found out that he was that remarkable personage who first put you on the track of my incarceration in an asylum, and of whom you talk so much, and yet know so little.

"I watched his departure from the house with his two prisoners, and in the waning moonlight saw the vessel set sail and depart, heading toward New York.

"I saw a form leave the shore, cross the lawn toward the gravel drive leading to the highway, and disappear, and it certainly was the Mysterious Detective.

"He was a man possessed of elegant manners, had the face of a woman almost, in perfection of feature, was slightly under the average height of men, but of a perfect form, and had an eye of strange power.

"He was beardless, well dressed, and wore a heavy military cloak and soft black hat.

"More I cannot tell you of him; but to me he appeared strangely like the descriptions you have given me of the daring murderer who escaped in your garb from prison.

"Now that I have written you, have told you of my danger, and all that occurred, I can go to bed and sleep, so with the hope that I may see you soon, and learn if this Invisible Detective has done aught with my wicked guardian and treacherous servant, I bid you good-night."

"Sincerely yours,

"DELIA HOWARD."

Having read this letter carefully, and with a face that paled and flushed at times, lawyer Rogers sprang to his feet, and, with his hands behind his back, as was his wont when deeply moved, he paced to and fro.

Then he took up the letter again and read it slowly and thoughtfully.

"Poor child, what a fright it must have been to her, and what a risk she ran had not this man been her friend.

"But who, in Heaven's name, is this Invisible Ivan?

"It is a question I cannot answer any more than any one else that I have met.

"He has wonderful pluck, and self-confidence, to, unaided, arrest those two men, who naturally were desperate at their discovery.

"Then, too, he sent them off in the very vessel that this rascal Kane had intended to take poor Delia away on board of.

"I do not understand this, nor what he intends doing with them.

"I will go down to The Hornet's and have him find out what sloop has come down from the Sound since dawn, or midnight, and we will

board every one and see what information we can gain thereby.

"But let me first see what other letters I have.

"Ah! here is one in the hand-writing of that mystery, Ivan, as I live!"

He took up the letter in question and continued:

"It bears no stamp, nor address; so was left by hand; but when?"

He called for a servant and made inquiries, but no letter had been delivered.

"Who put this letter on my desk?" he asked.

"I got a letter for you, sir, by the first mail, and by the eleven o'clock, but nothing else came," said the girl.

"But this letter?"

"That one lay on your desk when I dusted it this morning, sir."

"It was not there at one o'clock last night," said the lawyer.

"It was there at seven o'clock this morning, sir."

"All right," and as the girl left the room a strange look came over the lawyer's face, as he muttered:

"I must change my locks too, for that Invisible Ivan was surely here last night.

"Now to see what he says," and the lawyer broke the seal of the missive so strangely received.

CHAPTER XXV.

ADVICE TO A LAWYER.

LAWYER BONHILL ROGERS was a man that understood well the art of concealing his thoughts and emotions, and his face was as a mask, when before the public gaze.

But now, alone in his study, and reading a letter from one who was a perfect mystery to him, as to all others it seemed, his face showed the varying emotions he felt as he glanced at the written pages before him.

It was dated at his own house, written upon his own note-paper, and inclosed a check, payable to the bearer, for a considerable sum, which the writer said in a P. S. he had picked up off of the floor in the library.

The letter read as follows:

"IN YOUR LIBRARY,

"TWO O'CLOCK AND THIRTY MINUTES.

"LAWYER BONHILL ROGERS:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—I just returned from Eden Mansion, upon the Sound, where I have been engaged in a little Secret Service work, so dropped in to leave you an explanatory note of what I have done, and at the same time give you, a lawyer, some advice upon another matter.

"Learning that Mr. Lawrence Kane, the false-hearted, cruel guardian of Miss Howard, meant to enrich himself as best he could, by robbing his late ward, and at the same time avenge his imaginary wrongs upon her, I sifted the matter and discovered that he had a man in her employ, acting as assistant butler.

"This man—Henderson was his alias there, his real name being Henry Anderson—is an escaped convict from a Western penitentiary, where he is under a life sentence for murder.

"He escaped two years ago, and was known to Mr. Kane, and meeting him here the late guardian of Miss Howard recognized him, and urged him to aid him in his little game of robbery, and perhaps assassination, for I do not believe that, after he had gotten her check for her gold deposited with her bankers, he would have ever permitted her to go free and make his villainy known.

"His intention was to kidnap Miss Howard, by the aid of the man Henderson, and carry her to some desolate spot, at once forcing her to sign her checks for the deposit with her bankers, and which he knew she intended to transfer to another bank at your suggestion, so that it would cause no comment from them.

"What he meant then to do is surmise, of course; but, knowing his plans, no matter to you how, I chartered for him his sloop, and crew of three men, and so my men went, instead of his, as he believed them.

"I then ran up by sail to Eden, saw Miss Howard, told her of the plot, though not that he meant to assassinate her, as I believe he did, and with her aid, and that of her nurse, I captured both Kane and Henderson.

"I sent the two gentlemen on board the sloop in iron, and I walked to the station and took the midnight train down to the city, coming here.

"Now to-morrow, at noon, I will have the sloop at the foot of Forty-second street, East river, and you will find her anchored out in the stream, flying a small red flag at her mast-head.

"Go on board with officers of the law and you will find the two prisoners in the cabin; but my men will not be there, so do not anticipate finding them.

"Please leave the sloop at her anchorage, as the owner, from whom I chartered her, will be there after two o'clock to get her.

"As to the prisoners, you had better send Henderson back to the State Prison, where he will continue to serve out his life sentence; with Lawrence Kane you can do as you deem best, as to prosecute him would bring out the secret which you wish to avoid, of Miss Howard having been in an asylum, and other disagreeable details.

"If you allow him to go free, I am sure he will not come East again, after I have given him a little good advice, before I leave him to you.

"But if you wish to prosecute him, you know, as a lawyer, that you can send him to prison, though when he comes out he will be that more revengeful against her.

"Now, sir, having told you of this Eden affair, I beg to inclose a letter that I had previously written for you, and upon a matter of great importance.

"Hoping that you will not fail to be prompt at noon, in boarding the sloop,

"Yours to command,

"IVAN THE INVISIBLE.

"I send within a check of yours, payable to bearer, which I picked up off of the floor."

"Well, he is honest, that is certain, for he could have drawn that check, and knew it.

"I dropped it last night, and feared I had lost it somewhere.

"Now to his second letter," and lawyer Rogers opened the envelope, which was addressed with his name and number in the street.

It bore no date or heading, but was written in the same bold hand as the other one just read.

"MY DEAR LAWYER ROGERS," it began: "Some time since, you will recall, an old lady called at your office, and placed in your hands a case she was anxious to have cleared up satisfactorily, and you undertook it.

"It was the case of Vertner vs. Vertner, the husband having mysteriously disappeared, and being supposed to have committed suicide.

"You remember that you went out to the home of the deserted wife, on Long Island, and Chief Gordon, The Hornet, accompanied you and you were greatly surprised to find out that Mrs. Vertner knew nothing of the case having been placed in your hands to work out to a solution, nor did she believe her husband alive, while she had never seen, or heard of, the old lady who interested herself in the matter to the extent of consulting you.

"But you, having your fee, would not desert the case, and set to work to find out just what was the truth.

"You will find out, by letters arriving by the English steamer yesterday, and which you will receive to-day at your office—"

"My God! what does not this man know?" cried the lawyer, aloud.

Then he resumed the letter:

"—that all inquiries of the barrister in England, to whom you wrote, resulted in discovering nothing regarding this man, Maurice Vertner, more than you already knew—I e., he was born in England, had run off to sea as a boy, and had never been seen since.

"I have been more fortunate, as you will see by reading what follows:

"Maurice Vertner, on his father's side, was French, his mother being English.

"His father taught French in a F-male Academy in Portsmouth, England, and there his mother married him, she being one of the pupils.

"It was a runaway match, and in time she was forgiven.

"The father of Maurice Vertner died, and some years after his mother, while the boy was at sea; but if you wish to find out just what has become of the young man whose wife believes him dead, go, or send a trustworthy representative, to France, not England, and by examining the family records at Nantes, on the river Loire, you may find that to instruct you on the case in point, while not very far from St. Maziere, on the same stream, may be found the Chateau de Maurice, about which hangs a history of deep interest for certain dwellers in a Long Island village.

"Pardon the advice I give, but carry it out at all odds, and it will add greatly to your fame already won as a legal luminary of the New York bar.

"A word to the wise is sufficient, where a whole sermon is thrown away upon a fool.

"With sincere respect for you, as a wise man,

"I remain

"Obediently yours,

"IVAN, THE DETECTIVE."

"This advice is to be followed, for this man has never failed me and I feel that he knows far more than he has written.

"How he gets all of his information Heaven only knows; but get it he does, and he has proven true as steel where Delia Howard was concerned, and certainly has won the right to have me trust him.

"Now to go to the chief's office, and have him go with me to board the sloop and take charge of those two marauders of Eden," and drawing on his overcoat, the lawyer left his home and walked briskly along toward the quarters of The Hornet.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

CHIEF GORDON seemed really pleased when Lawyer Rogers told him he had also received a communication from Invisible Ivan, written at his desk, and said:

"Well, I am glad to see that he shows no partiality, Lawyer Rogers; but you surprise me in what you say about that rascally guardian's attempt upon Miss Howard's life, for I also feel assured that he meant to kill her.

"I will call up Ferret, Old Gaslight and Bull's Eye, and we will go at once to the sloop, for it is about time."

The chief then gave orders for the three detectives named to follow in a hack, and taking a carriage at the door, he and lawyer Rogers drove rapidly to the foot of Forty-second street upon the East river.

"There is the sloop on time," said the lawyer, pointing to a small craft at anchor off-shore, flying a red flag at her topmast.

"She's there, and is deserted, sure."

"He said they would be in the cabin."

"Yes, and he has his eye on us now, to see if we go on board; but I have an idea."

"Well?"

"This sloop may really belong to the Invisible Detective."

"Yes."

"And the skipper who comes for it may be one of his men."

"True."

"I'll leave a man on board to find out."

"And then?"

"He can arrest the skipper and hold him until we come back this afternoon and interview him."

"Yes, we may get at the bottom of the secret that way, as you suggest, and we must try every way in our power to find out who this wheel within a wheel is, this mysterious being who is stealing your thunder."

"We must, for he is a better Secret Service man than my whole force, and he has some motive we cannot get at for all he does."

"I should hate to have him prove to be that murderer, Percy Gray."

"So should I, for I owe him my life, and it would be hard for me to capture that man, I assure you."

"And for me to see him hang, after the good he has done me; but here come your men."

A second hack now drove up, and out of it sprang the three detectives, Ferret, Gaslight and Bull's Eye.

A boat was soon secured and the party started off for the sloop.

No one appeared to be on board, and opening the companionway door Chief Gordon sprang down into the cabin.

"Here they are," he called back, and all entered.

There sat the two prisoners, ironed hands and feet, and chained to the floor of the cabin.

"Mr. Kane, we meet again," said the lawyer.

"This is an outrage, for I went to visit my ward upon a little matter of business, and was seized along with this poor fellow, whom I merely asked to help me to see the lady," said Lawrence Kane.

"Mr. Kane, lying will not help you in the slightest degree, I assure you, for we know the truth."

"This gentleman, Henry Henderson, returns to his quarters in the — State prison, and what will be your rate is yet to be decided."

"Now, Chief Gordon, the prisoners are at your disposal."

"Gaslight, take that man Henderson to the office, and send him, under guard of two men, to the — State prison, where a reward is offered for his capture."

"You, Bull's Eye, take this gentleman, Mr. Lawrence Kane, to lawyer Rogers's office, where we will soon join you."

"You can remove his irons in the hack, but if he attempts to escape, kill him."

"I'll do it, sir."

As the men moved off with their prisoners, and entered the boat, Gordon called out:

"Take the same carriage, going by my office first, and then on to lawyer Rogers's."

"Now, Ferret?"

"Well, captain?"

"Do you note anything peculiar about this craft?"

"She's as trim as a yacht, sir," answered the detective.

"So she is; anything else?"

"She carries a vast amount of canvas for a pretended coaster."

"So she does, and is in perfect trim, far better than the usual run of traders."

"I observe that," said lawyer Rogers.

"Now, Ferret, I wish you to remain on board, alone, and in this cabin, as soon as Bull's Eye sends a boat from the shore off for us, as I told him to do."

"I will, sir."

"You will take a position in the cabin and await the coming of the skipper on board."

"Tell him your party left you here to give the sloop over to him, fearing some one might board her from the shore."

"Yes, sir."

"See just what manner of man he is, and his crew, for he will hardly come alone, and ask him if he is going down the river to put you ashore in the lower part of the city."

"Then get aboard the first tug you can find, follow this sloop if she goes any distance, and find out all about her."

"If she anchors or lands, follow her captain and report."

"I will, sir."

"There is no need of urging great caution with you, Ferret."

"No, sir; for I was born cautious."

And Ferret's serious face relaxed into a smile, while he added:

"Your idea is, chief, that the skipper of this craft is more than a coast trader?"

"Exactly."

"I'll find out his pedigree, sir."

"And about this sloop, too?"

"I'll do it, chief."

Soon after a shore boat came off and the chief and the lawyer got into it and were landed near their waiting carriage, which they entered and were driven rapidly down to the office of the latter.

They found Bull's Eye and his prisoner awaiting in an inner room, and the latter looked pale and nervous.

Glancing hastily over his mail, the lawyer

saw that there was nothing requiring immediate attention excepting a letter in the now well-known handwriting of Invisible Ivan.

Hastily he broke the seal and read:

"In my request for the pardon of the informer of the counterfeiters' den, I neglected to give the name of the one seeking Executive clemency, so beg that you have it made out for Bailey Ballou, resident of New York, born in Chicago, Illinois, and aged thirty-four."

"Send, as requested, to Detective Ivan, General Delivery, City, and oblige

"Yours,

"THE WIZARD DETECTIVE."

"Ah! now I will find out just what firm employed Bailey Ballou as an engraver, and I have already made application, indorsed by the mayor, chief of police and Captain Hester and myself, for the pardon in blank, and was going to ask you to send it, Mr. Rogers."

"When it returns, I will find out just who calls for the letter at the post-office, for the day I mail it I will post the postmaster and have two men on duty to arrest the one who comes forth."

"Well, some of our schemes should prove successful to capture this Wizard," said lawyer Rogers.

And the two went into the next office where the prisoner awaited in great trepidation.

"Bull's Eye, go to my office and get from clerk Schuyler the blank pardon from my desk."

"Tell him it is the one made out and indorsed for the informer on the King of the Counterfeiters," and in obedience to the order of his chief the detective departed on his mission, while lawyer Rogers turned to the prisoner, who had again been ironed.

"Lawrence Kane, you have been caught in an act that causes the penitentiary to yawn for your reception in its walls."

"I am a greatly abused man, Mr. Rogers," whined the culprit.

"You are an unmitigated scoundrel, sir, and yet for the sake of the lady you have so cruelly treated, and meant to murder, I spare you this time, as I did once before."

"It is to prevent dragging her into court, and making all public, that I do so, and if I pressed the charge against you, well you know that I would not rest until I had you in prison to the full limit of the law for all your offenses and each one."

"Willful persecution and perjury in placing her in a lunatic asylum would be one count; a second would be your robbery of her systematically, and your attempted burglary and assassination of her."

"Your wife, yes, and your invalid daughter, as conspirators with you, would be your companions in prison, and I would not stop until I had utterly crushed you heart, body and soul, as you deserve."

"But this time I spare you, and you can go."

"You shall have one hour in which to leave this city, and if ever you are known to step foot in the States of New York, New Jersey or Connecticut again, I will have the papers ready to serve on you."

"That your steps have been dogged, even when you were not suspected of doing wrong, you may know by your clever capture in your diabolical attempt."

"Now go to your home; but if you leave it for a day it will be telegraphed here, and you will be under the eye of a detective."

"You have money and can make a living, for your business is paying well, as I know where you went after leaving here."

"You see I know you and just what you are doing; so be warned."

"Now, do you swear to cease all attempts to persecute that poor girl?"

"I do, Mr. Rogers, so help me God!" cried the wretch, eagerly.

"Begone!"

He needed no second bidding, and hastily held out his hands to Gordon, who took his irons off.

Then he turned, as if about to thank the lawyer, but Chief Gordon said sternly:

"You have but an hour, sir, so be off!"

He darted out of the door, running up against Bull's Eye who was just entering, and who, believing the man to be escaping, seized him by the throat, hurled him to the floor, and handcuffed him in an instant.

A groan came from the wretched man, who felt that he was doomed, but Chief Gordon called out:

"Let him go, Bull's Eye, for he is under bonds to keep the peace."

"Is that so?" said Bull's Eye, and releasing the man he laughed aloud as he saw him hasten away, while he said:

"Chief, that man will be arrested by the first officer he meets, if he keeps up that pace; he's as wild as a Texas steer; but here's the paper you sent for."

Bonnill Rogers took the document, filled in the name, indorsed the requisition, and mailed it to a friend in Washington, who stood high in influence with the "powers that be," and urged that it be presented at once to the President to act upon.

"Now, Detective Clapp, a word with you," said Lawyer Rogers.

"Yes, Mr. Rogers," and Bull's Eye turned to the lawyer.

"You speak French, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"How would you like a trip across the ocean?"

"If you and the chief wish me to go I would like it."

"I do, and Captain Gordon says no better man can be found, so go and engage passage on the French steamer that sails soon, and make your arrangements to be gone for an indefinite period."

"To-night come to my house and I will give you full instructions as to what you are to do."

"I'll be on time, sir, and I'll do the best I can for you on the other side."

"I do not doubt that, Detective Clapp, for I know just what you are capable of, only this Invisible Ivan is a little too much for you, as he is for the rest of us," and the lawyer laughed lightly, while Bull's Eye returned:

"I take off my hat to the Wizard, sir; but I'll be on time to-night," and he left the office, while the lawyer and The Hornet set to work to prepare his plan of action when he should reach the other side.

They had just finished the work when in walked Ferret.

His face was as serious as ever; but Chief Gordon seemed to read news in his eyes, and said:

"Well, Parson Ferret, what about the sloop and the skipper?"

"Yes, Ferret; sit down and report, for I feel that you have made some discovery."

"I have, lawyer; I have, chief," was the reply.

"Well, out with it," Gordon remarked.

"I waited for the coming of the skipper, and he arrived soon after your departure, accompanied by two men."

"He had a red face, red hair and cropped beard, but his eyes were black and awful sharp, although he wore spectacles which his grandmother doubtless left him."

"He had a heavy pea-jacket on, pants stuck in his boots, a scarf about his neck and big woolen gloves, while his two men were ordinary-looking seamen."

"But he was not?"

"No, chief; he looked the New England skipper, yet I don't think he is one."

"Ah! did he know how to handle his vessel?"

"He did, and is a sailor."

"I told him I had stayed to turn the craft over to him, and asked him to put me ashore down-town if he was going that way, and he said he would."

"Well, he ran into a slip near Catharine street ferry, and I thanked him and went ashore; but I watched, and soon after he came off of the sloop and walked leisurely along up the street."

"I followed, and, chief, as I'm a living man, that old salt water specimen went into the Haunted Rookery."

"No!" cried the chief and the lawyer in chorus.

"Fact, gentlemen; he went there, pulled the bell, the door opened and in he went."

"I waited half an hour to see him come out, but he did not, so I came to report."

"This is news, and I'll solve the riddle of the Haunted Rookery at once."

"Ferret!"

"Yes, chief."

"Have Captain Benedict furnish three officers in citizen's dress, and you get Wallace Laird and Henry Moore, and all be ready to raid the Rookery to-night."

"Lawyer Rogers, will you dine with me down-town at the Astor House and accompany us?"

"Willingly, for I confess a great curiosity to be inside of that old house, and I'll send word to Detective Clapp to await my coming."

A rendezvous was then appointed with Ferret, and the chief and Bonnill Rogers left the office to dine together, hopeful that the mystery of the Haunted Rookery would soon be solved.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PALACE AND HOVEL.

THE night came on with rain and sleet, and the wind blew it fiercely in the faces of the few wayfarers who were forced to be abroad.

But, after a substantial dinner, the lawyer and The Hornet buttoned their great-coats about them, and springing into a coupé were driven away to the rendezvous with Ferret and his waiting comrades.

They were found at the entrance of a downtown theater, loafing about as though waiting to go in when the curtain rose, and no one seeing them would have suspected that any one of the six, the three police officers and trio of detectives were known to each other.

Springing out of the coupé, Chief Gordon walked up to the box-office, made an inquiry and walked back to the vehicle.

It was enough; he had been seen, and one by one the six waiting men left the theater corridor and started in the direction of the Five Points.

The driver of the coupé had his instructions, and after going a few squares he came to a halt.

Here the lawyer and Chief Gordon left the vehicle and proceeded on foot to the dreary, dilapidated part of town in which was located the Haunted Rookery.

Entering the alley, they turned into the deserted court-yard and were met by Ferret and his men.

"Captain Benedict has sent me his best men, I see," whispered Chief Gordon to Bonnell Rogers, and he added:

"There is Mocksley, and the two beyond him are officers Parker and Sloan.

"I can rely upon them as upon my own men, if we have trouble."

"Do you expect it?"

"I do not know what to expect, for that old mansion is a *terra incognita* to me; but I go prepared for the worst."

"I think you have an idea that it is the resort of a band of thieves," said lawyer Rogers.

"I hardly know what to think; but come, let us go, and I am glad the night is so inclement, for what we do can be done quietly."

And advancing to the door the chief pulled the bell.

Almost instantly was it opened by a servant in livery.

He started slightly at sight of a crowd of visitors, but was unable to close the door, if such had been his intention, as Gordon stepped quickly inside followed by lawyer Rogers and the others.

"Gentlemen, this is a strange intrusion, and my young mistress will be very angry," said the servant, and he stretched forth his hand to grasp a bell-rope when Gordon said:

"Drop that hand, sir, quick."

A pistol was leveled at the servant, and he obeyed, saying sullenly:

"I have no desire to be shot down; but why do you thus enter a private house at night?"

"If you are robbers, you belie your looks."

"I am James Gordon, my man, Chief of the Secret Service League, and I have come upon important business and would see your master at once."

"My master is not in, sir."

"Your mistress is?"

"Master and mistress both left for the East to-night, sir; but Miss Kate is here."

"Is she the lady who drives out often in the Park?"

"Yes, sir, she often goes out for a drive."

"And the people here call her the Goddess."

"I do not know, sir, what she is called by the people about us, for we hold no communication with them; but her name is Miss Castleton."

"Her father's name is—"

"I can answer no questions, sir; but if you wish to see Miss Kate I will tell her you are here and know if she will see you."

"Do so, please."

"Walk into the reception-room, please," and the servant, in a stately way, threw open a door, ushering the officers into a large room, after which he disappeared.

They had observed the soft carpeting of the hall, the elegant appointments upon all sides, and the look of massive comfort upon everything.

But they were surprised at being ushered into a room that was fit to be the ante-chamber of a king.

There were soft silken sofas and ottomans inviting a seat, the floor was covered with a velvet carpet, a lamp burned brightly upon a center-table, and there were rare paintings upon the walls, while a wood fire burned upon the hearth, above which arose a massive mantle of bronze, the top ornamented with rare *bric-a-brac*.

A short while only was the man gone, and then he returned with the remark:

"Miss Castleton is at dinner, sir, but will see you."

Motioning to his men to remain where they were, and adding in a whisper:

"See that no one passes in or out, and keep your eyes on that flunky," Chief Gordon said aloud:

"Come, lawyer, we'll go up and see the lady."

"I guess we are wrong after all, Gordon," said Bonnell Rogers, as the two ascended the massive stairway together, the servant leading.

"We shall see," was the quiet response, and they were ushered into a magnificent parlor, brilliantly lighted, and beyond, through folding doors, was visible a table, at which sat a young lady at dinner, while a butler and an assistant, in livery, stood near.

The parlors were very large, furnished with luxurious elegance in every particular, while silk and velvet draperies covered the closed windows.

A wood fire burned brightly upon the hearth, and the mantle of carved marble held silver candelabras, in which were wax tapers, which gave a soft light to all.

As the gentlemen appeared in the parlor the young lady said something to the butler, and he hastily advanced toward them, bowing politely, with the remark:

"Miss Castleton's compliments, and she would be glad to have the gentlemen join her at the dinner-table."

"Come, Gordon, there is no back-out now," said the lawyer, and Bonnell Rogers advanced with the chief, bowed, as he stepped across the threshold of the folding-doors, and said:

"Miss Castleton, pardon our disturbing you, but our visit can soon be explained."

"I am Mr. Bonnell Rogers, an attorney, and this is my friend, Captain Gordon, of the Secret Service."

The lady arose, bowed, and said with perfect composure:

"You are welcome, gentlemen; pray be seated and join me at dinner, and any business you may have come on can be attended to afterward."

"Thank you, we have but just dined, but will not disturb you," and they took the seats prepared for them, while the butler filled their glasses with wine, and the fair hostess said:

"You will pardon me then if I continue my dinner?"

They bowed, and raising her glass she said:

"Your very good health, gentlemen."

Lawyer Rogers was perfectly at his ease, but the chief was a trifle nonplused at the reception he had met, from the door to the dining-room.

He had anticipated a different greeting, a far different scene, and he was taken aback, and remained silent, while the lawyer chatted away with his hostess upon various subjects.

Chief Gordon saw that there was the same air of elegance, luxury and refinement in the dining-room that there was elsewhere, and the table service was of massive silver and the finest French china.

Game, hunting and fishing scenes adorned the walls, all being rare and artistic paintings, and the liveried servants moved about in respectful silence, needing no request to keep the glasses filled with wine.

Then the chief turned his eyes upon the maiden, and he saw a lovely face, strong in feature, black, expressive, brilliant eyes, long dark lashes, a well-arched brow and perfect teeth.

A wealth of golden hair was gracefully arranged about her haughty head, and short ringlets clustered over her forehead and about her temples.

In her ears were large diamond *solitaires*, and upon her hands were costly rings.

She wore a dress of white velvet, trimmed with canary-hued silk, and her form was exquisite in shape and her every movement graceful.

Having finished her dessert and sipped her coffee, she arose and lawyer Rogers offered his arm to escort her to the parlor, and she accepted it with a smile, and, when seated, asked:

"Now, gentlemen, how can I serve you, for, in the absence of my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Evelyn, I suppose it devolves upon me to talk business."

"Will you explain, Mr. Rogers?" asked Gordon, with a sly look at the lawyer, as he threw that disagreeable work upon him.

"Certainly, and it is your due, Miss Castleton, to have a full explanation."

"The truth is, your coming here to this old house created a sensation, and so much pressure was brought to bear upon my friend here, Captain Gordon, to prove that it was the abode of illegal characters, that he was forced to come here to prove to the contrary, and his officers are below in the reception-room."

"I am at a loss to know why my grandparents and myself should be suspected of aught that was wrong," said the maiden, her face growing serious.

"It was the fact of an elegant carriage, with servants in livery, driving away from this locality of hovels, so to speak, each day, and then persons of your appearance, and that of your grandparents, dwelling here, that gave rise to suspicion, while other things that have occurred added to the rumors, caused our visit."

"You are welcome, as I said, gentlemen, and you are at liberty to search the house from cellar to garret; but the fact is, my grandparents dwelt in this place long years ago, they have no friends in New York, and they came back here to live."

"They did not wish to attract attention to the fact, so a house adjoining, in the rear, on another street, was bought, and an entrance-way cut through."

"Workmen came that way in fitting up the place, our furniture was brought in boxes, through that house, and so our coming was considered mysterious."

"We have ample wealth, have been accustomed to refined life and luxury, and so we still keep it up, having our servants about us; but my grandparents are away for a few days as I have said, having gone off East with an odd cousin of ours, a sea captain, who urged a visit to the old homestead in Massachusetts, and who has been stopping with us a few days, to my great amusement, for he is a thorough Yankee."

The lawyer glanced at the chief, and the latter understood the look, and rising, said:

"My dear Miss Castleton, I sincerely implore pardon, for the trouble we have put you to, and I promise you shall no more be disturbed through me; but having my suspicions aroused in various ways, I could not but come here as I have, and now that I have met you, you can count on me as a friend, should you again be worried."

"Here is my card, and I will be wholly at your service if need be."

"I thank you, Captain Gordon, and if need be I will seek you; but I am a Texas girl, and I am pretty well capable of taking care of myself, as a priest, who dogged me in my drives for days, discovered a short while since."

Again the two visitors changed looks, and lawyer Rogers asked:

"May I inquire what part of Texas are you from?"

"I claim Galveston, and also our ranch in the western part of the State as my homes; but in fact I make myself at home wherever I am."

"Permit me to inquire if you have met a Texas ranchero by the name of Paul Garnet?"

Her eyes drooped, but she answered:

"Yes, I knew him well, but he is dead."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, he was lost at sea from off a Havana steamer over a year ago."

Lawyer Rogers bowed, and taking out a card handed it to the maiden with the remark:

"This is my address, Miss Castleton, and if I mistake not, your grandmother has already called upon me professionally in another person's behalf; but we will not detain you any longer," and they turned to go, when the young hostess touched a silver bell that looked like a toy.

The butler appeared in answer:

"Orleans, escort the gentlemen to the lower hall and offer them cigars."

The butler bowed, and leading the way, took from a table a silver stand of cigars and matches, and handed them around to the entire party, as they all assembled in the lower hall to draw on their coats, preparing to face the cold blasts without.

"It is allowable, gentlemen, to light your cigars here," said Orleans, politely, lighting several papers.

The cigars, fragrant Havanas, were lighted, and the party left the strange house, a hovel without, a palace within, and the chief said aloud as they crossed the court:

"I, James Gordon, do hereby acknowledge myself wholly at fault, and to you, Parson Ferret, I offer the advice not to fool around there, for the young lady who dwells in that palatial rookery is a Texan."

A laugh greeted the chief's words, and, more than ever in the dark, The Hornet dismissed his men, and, reaching the coupé, drove rapidly away with Bonnell Rogers to his home, where Bull's Eye was waiting their coming.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

INVISIBLE IVAN HOLDS TRUMPS.

DAYS passed by after the visit to the old homestead near the Five Points, and changes came to some.

Sam Clapp, the trusted detective, had sailed for France on his secret mission, the counterfeiters had been quickly tried and sentenced, Henry Anderson, *alias* Henderson, had been returned to his life imprisonment in a Western State, and Lawrence Kane had hastened back to his home in the West to force himself to be content with what he had for the present.

Delia Howard had told lawyer Rogers all that had occurred, and he had persuaded her that there was no more danger to be dreaded, and also had persuaded himself that the one who had a second time saved her could be no other than Percy Gray, the fugitive murderer.

What he had in common with Miss Howard the lawyer could not discover, and he questioned the maiden closely regarding the pretended detective, to feel convinced that she had never before met him.

No other communications had been received from the Invisible Detective, nor had a single report come in of the rescued Queen of the Crooks; in fact, a dearth of news had settled upon those who figure in this story, and no information of interest to my readers had been gleaned by the Secret Service men.

Ferret was still upon the track to discover the solution of mysteries, and yet could bring in no report.

He did report that the old tenants of the Rookery had returned from the East, for he had seen each one, at different times, driving in their elegant carriage, and the blonde beauty, the Goddess, was still seen taking her drives in the Park.

She had given several suppers to the poor of her neighborhood, sent coal to the poorest, and aided others with money and groceries, and she was fairly worshiped by one and all, and to such an extent that rather than expect harm from them, they would have mobbed any one who had said a word against her.

The Haunted Homestead still kept on its dreary look without, and what went on within no one could conjecture, for no one seemed to be admitted to the sacred interior of that palatial home.

The sloop of the Yankee skipper had disappeared from the slip near Catherine Street Ferry, and whither it had gone no one knew.

So matters were going on, when one morning, seated in his office, lawyer Rogers's office boy came in and said:

"A lady to see you, sir."

"I am very busy; who is she?"
"The same old lady who was here once before, sir."

"Ah! show her in," and a moment after his client, acting for Mrs. Maurice Vertner, entered. Her form was bent slightly, her hair snow-white, but she had an air of refinement that was marked.

"I have come to see you again, Mr. Rogers—thank you, sir, kindly," and she sat down in the easy-chair he wheeled up to the stove for her.

"I am glad to see you, Mrs.—Mrs.—I forgot that I had not the pleasure of your name."

"Ah, yes, I did not tell it you, and there really is no need to do so, as you are not acting for me, but another."

"That other does not authorize you to ask it, or me to act, madam, as she believes her husband dead."

"True, sir, but yet you have acted."

"You know this?"

"Certainly, and that you have sent Detective Sam Clapp to France."

The lawyer seemed surprised, and said:

"May I ask how you know this, madam?"

"As I know many other things, lawyer Rogers, by finding out; but you have not heard from your man yet?"

"Oh, no, for it is not time."

"You will get a cablegram soon, for he has made some important discoveries."

"Indeed?"

"He has, as I expected he would."

"You know this, madam?"

"Oh, yes, and I have come to say that when you hear from him you must do as he says, and here is money to defray all expenses."

"But, madam, I—"

"Not a word, sir, for you must see this matter to the end, now that you have undertaken it, and I propose to furnish the money necessary, and in this roll of bank-notes you will find two thousand dollars."

"Should you find that you need more, advance it, and I will repay you, if you have confidence in me."

"Perfect confidence, madam."

"I thank you, lawyer Rogers."

"Good-day, sir," and the old lady rose, bowed, and the lawyer escorted her to the door.

"You drove here, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"Permit me to see you to your carriage?"

She accepted his arm, and he found a carriage, with servants in livery on the box.

No monogram or initials were on the carriage, and no letter on the harness, so he saw nothing to give him a clue, though, as he walked back, he said to himself:

"She is without doubt Mrs. Evelyn, the grandmother of that young lady, Miss Castleton, for there is a strong resemblance between them."

"She knows about this Vertner's suicide, or flight, as it may turn out to be, and wishes to aid the wife from philanthropic notions."

"But how does she know about Clapp's going abroad?"

"And the cablegram?"

"If he cables me I will be tempted to believe the old woman a witch, in lieu of a better solution for her strange knowledge."

Hardly had he taken his seat when Chief Gordon dropped in, and to him he told about his visitor.

"Well, lawyer Rogers, you think it was that Miss Castleton's grandmother?"

"I am sure of it, Gordon."

"We are no nearer finding out what we wanted to know than we were."

"No, so it seems."

"I wonder if Clapp will telegraph you?"

In answer the door opened and a messenger came in with a cablegram.

When the boy had departed lawyer Rogers tore it open and read aloud:

"Have made important discoveries. Need the aid of Charity Kate. Let her bring with her the wife of the one I am looking for, and start at once. Send me a thousand dollars by the hand of the Queen Bee."

"Lose no time in starting them. "BULL'S EYE"

"The old lady is right, chief."

"True; but what will you do?"

"Can I send the Queen Bee?"

"Certainly."

"Then I will see when a steamer sails, and go out to visit Mrs. Vertner."

"Will she go?"

"She must, for now I am sure that her husband is not dead, and, if she wishes to find him, she will have to obey instructions, and go," and, as the lawyer spoke, the boy came in to report that a lady wished to see him, and gave the name of Mrs. Vertner.

"Gordon, this looks like the work of a magician," said the lawyer, with a laugh.

"Egad, you are right," was the answer, and just then Mrs. Vertner entered.

Her face was pale and she seemed excited, as she bowed to Rogers and the chief, at the same time saying quickly:

"I have received a communication, sir, that I have come to consult you upon."

"Yes, madam, and it was my intention to visit you this afternoon."

"Indeed? But here is the communication," and she handed a letter to the lawyer, who, glancing at the writing, said:

"From Ivan, the Detective, I see."

"You know him, sir?"

"Well, we have had some correspondence together," was the answer of Bonhill Rogers, who then remembering that he had never yet written to the Wizard Detective, hedged his remark by adding:

"It was all on his side, though."

Then he read the letter aloud, and it was as follows:

"MY DEAR MADAM:—"

"You will insist upon it that your husband, Maurice Vertner, is dead; but proof can be given you in good time that he is alive and well, and left you from motives which he is anxious to keep secret."

"Be governed by the advice of those who wish you well, and seek the aid of Bonhill Rogers, Esquire, an Attorney at Law, No. — Broadway, New York."

"He will advise you what is best to be done."

"Hoping you will heed good advice,"

"I am sincerely yours,"

"IVAN,"

"The Detective."

"You know this man who writes me, you said?" asked Mrs. Vertner.

"I have never met him, to my knowledge, madam, and yet he has served me well, as also my friend here, Chief Gordon."

"And you would advise what, sir?"

"That you do as he suggests."

"You do not believe my husband is dead?"

"I feel assured that he is not."

"May I ask your reasons, sir?"

"Well, madam, at the suggestion of the lady, of whom I spoke to you, as befriending you, I wrote to England regarding your husband, but got no satisfactory reply."

"Then I received word from Ivan, the Invisible, urging me to send a trusty man to France to look up Mr. Vertner."

"I did so, and he sailed over three weeks ago, and here is a cablegram I just received from him," and he handed it to the wife to read.

"I will go, sir, for ever having been a good husband to me, I feel that my husband's mind must have been affected to have him leave me as he did, for now I believe that he is alive."

"You will go then to Europe?"

"Yes, sir, whenever you deem best, and I will draw what money I need—"

"Pardon me, but you need not draw on your limited resources for expenses, and all the money needed I have."

"But, sir, you must not pay this for me."

"The money was furnished by your unknown lady friend, madam."

"But she must not—"

"Pardon me, madam, but you can arrange with her afterward; but now I hope you will come into the city prepared to sail, and the one who goes with you, Mrs. Vassar, is an estimable lady, and a detective of rare ability."

"I will leave my children in safe hands, sir, and return to town to-morrow prepared to start," and Mrs. Vertner departed, while a postman entered bearing an official-looking document.

"It is the pardon for Bailey Ballou, and signed by the President, so have your men ready, Gordon, for I will mail the letter to-morrow, as requested to this Ivan, and we'll see if we can capture him in that way."

The next afternoon on the outward bound steamer, Mrs. Vertner set sail for Europe, and her companion on the voyage was Mrs. Kathleen Vassar, otherwise known as Charity Kate and the Queen Bee Detective, though no one would have suspected the sweet-faced woman of being one of the most fearless and shrewdest members of the Secret Service League.

Chief Gordon and lawyer Rogers saw them safely on board, and then the two friends drove to Delmonico's for lunch, after which they went to the office of the attorney, to see if word had been brought by the men on watch at the post-office of the capture of Ivan the Invisible.

"Any visitors been in?" asked the lawyer of his boy.

"Yes, sir, several clients, who said they would call again, and an old gentleman who left a letter for you."

"Who was he?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Where is the letter?"

"He said it was important, so I put it upon your desk in the private office."

Thither the lawyer and chief went, and a glance at the letter caused the former to exclaim:

"Another letter from the Invisible!"

"No!"

"See here," and he turned over the envelope, while he opened the folded sheet.

"Gordon?"

"Yes."

"He knows of the sailing of those two ladies to-day."

"The deuce he does."

"And that is not all."

"What more, pray?"

"Call off your dogs-of-war," and the lawyer smiled.

"What do you mean?"

"How many men have you on duty at the post-office?"

"Three."

"The clerk understood he was to signal to them when Ivan called for his letter?"

"Perfectly."

"Well, here is what the Invisible says:

"DEAR SIR:—"

"I am glad you were so prompt in getting Mrs. Vertner and the Queen Bee off on to-day's steamer, and hope for good tidings from them, and Detective Clapp, your man over there."

"I have to thank you, too, for the pardon of Bailey Ballou, received this noon, and I will see that it reaches his hands."

"With respect,"

"Yours obediently,"

"INVISIBLE IVAN."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Chief Gordon, rising to his feet and pacing the floor.

"Gordon."

"Well?"

"There is one thing certain."

"What is it?"

"This Invisible Ivan and the old lady, my client, friend of Mrs. Vertner, are both interested in this Maurice Vertner case."

"That is so; and the old lady must know this Wizard Detective."

"So it strikes me."

"We must look into that; but now let us go and interview those figure-heads at the post-office."

"And the clerks, too, at the general-delivery windows."

"Yes."

And they went together to the post-office.

The detectives, three in number, were still there, patiently waiting and watching, and questioned by their chief, no man had been seen who answered the descriptions of the Wizard Detective.

The clerks were then questioned, but said no one had called for a letter for Ivan, the Detective.

Search was made for it in the box where it had been placed, but it was gone!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE UNKNOWN RESCUERS.

I MUST take the reader back a few weeks, in my story, to the time that the King of the Counterfeiters and his band were captured, and the Queen of the Crooks was carried off boldly from the charge of the detectives.

The carriage rolled rapidly away from the door, until brought to a standstill by Captain Hester, and then the nerve of one of the pretended policemen within saved them from capture.

After driving a short distance, one of the men said:

"Madam, you must understand that we are your friends, not foes, and submit accordingly."

"My friends?" she said with surprise.

"Yes, madam; you heard what I said to that police captain?"

"Yes."

"Well, we are serving one who is your friend, and we wish to save you from capture."

"In doing so we must run no risk ourselves, so you must do as we wish."

"I will; but who is it that you say is my friend?"

"That you will know all in good time; but now throw this cloak about you, and we will change carriages at the next corner."

Just then the driver drew up, and right by another carriage.

Springing out of one, the three got into the other vehicle, and the two started off in different directions.

"You must allow us to blindfold you now, and this veil over your face will hide the handkerchief about your eyes from the driver."

"Is this necessary?"

"It is for our safety, madam."

"I submit, for I can but believe you mean well toward me, as otherwise you would have taken me directly to prison, or headquarters, if you were what you represented yourselves to be at the rooms."

"We mean you well, madam," said the man who had before spoken, and he bound a silk handkerchief about the woman's eyes, and placed a thick veil over her face.

Soon after the hack came to a halt, and another vehicle near was entered, and it drove off under direction of one of the men.

Coming to a halt in five minutes the three left the vehicle, and the woman, walking between the two men moved briskly along the deserted street.

At last they halted in an areaway, of an old house, and one of the men produced a key and the door was opened.

Into a hallway the other three led the woman, who asked:

"Can I take this handkerchief off now?"

"No, madam, not yet; but you soon shall," was the reply.

A dark lantern, carried by one of the men was opened, and they went along a dingy hall,

up a pair of rickety stairs, back through a long corridor, and then down another stairway, down, down, down until even the strong nerve of the woman failed her, and she cried:

"Oh, where are you taking me?"

"You will soon know, madam; but have no fear," was the reply.

Then she felt that they were passing along another corridor, up another pair of stairs, numbering some twenty steps, and they halted.

The rattle of keys was heard, a door was opened, and closed with a metallic sound, another door was unlocked, and the one who held her arm said:

"Now, madam, I will permit you to see, for these will be your quarters for the present."

A bright light was in the room, and at first she could not see; but as her eyes gained strength, after being bandaged, she saw that she was in a suite of rooms.

There was but one door of exit, it seemed, the one through which she had come, and no windows were visible, the light and air penetrating from the ceiling, which was high.

A coal fire burned in a grate, giving a cheerful look, and warmth, and there were three rooms visible, the one she was in being a comfortably-furnished sitting-room, the next a bedroom, and the third a kitchen and dining-room combined.

"Here, madam, you can make yourself at home, until the chief sees you and it is decided what you shall do."

"You will find these pleasant quarters, and the sideboard yonder has food and wine, while, if there is aught you need, just touch this bell."

"Tell me where I am."

"Our own safety depends upon our not doing so, madam; but the chief will tell you all that you should know, and in good time."

"Is your chief to hold me a prisoner?"

"That depends upon yourself, madam."

"Ah! he did not rescue me then to set me free?"

"I can tell you nothing more, for he will let you know all."

"Now good-night, madam, and, as I said, if there is aught that you need ring that bell and a woman will come to attend you."

The speaker had been most polite, but firm, while his companion had not spoken a word.

Now they turned to depart from the room, when the Queen of the Crooks called out:

"One moment!"

"Well, madam?"

"When will your chief visit me?"

"Doubtless in the morning, madam, after breakfast."

"Can he not rescue my husband from the men who hold him prisoner?"

"He could, madam, did he so wish."

"Will he not do so?"

"You must ask him that question."

"Who is your chief?"

"He is known as Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective."

And before the woman could make reply the two men had disappeared through the door and she was alone.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN A GILDED CAGE.

WHEN Ella Leslie, the Queen of the Crooks, found herself alone in the rooms to which she had been taken she hastily glanced about her, and discovering that she was at least in comfortable quarters, she turned to find out what means of escape there were open before her.

A short search convinced her that she might as well attempt to escape from a prison-cell unaided.

There were skylights over each room, for air, and giving ample light by day, and going into one chamber in the dark she saw the stars gleaming above; but over each skylight was a strong iron grating, so that she knew if she could even reach there by climbing up on piled-up furniture she could not escape.

A woman with a strong will and great courage, she at once determined to fret no more and to make the best of it, at least for the present.

Her husband would go to prison, that she knew; his trial and conviction would follow, that was certain; but she believed that if she was free she would be able to get him out, and free she must be.

Half undressing herself, she lay down upon the comfortable bed and was soon fast asleep.

The sun was shining brightly when she awoke, and she knew that some one was in the next room, and she hastened to peep in and discover who it was.

A glance revealed a woman, clad as a domestic, and busy about preparing breakfast.

A neatly-spread table and the flavor of broiling meats tempted the appetite, and hastily dressing, "Queen Ella," as she was called by the counterfeiters, entered the little dining-room and kitchen.

The woman bowed pleasantly, and said:

"Good-morning, miss; I was intending to call you, as breakfast is nearly ready."

"Where am I, my good woman?"

"In Master Ivan's house, miss."

"Who is Master Ivan?"

"A great detective."

"Ah! where is he?"

"In his own rooms."

"Who lives here with him?"

"There are many of us, miss."

"Will I be permitted to go out?"

"That is as the chief says, miss."

"When can I see him?"

"After you have had breakfast and I have put your rooms in order, I will tell him you wish to see him."

"Do so, please," and Queen Ella took her seat at the table.

The breakfast was delightfully cooked and served, and she enjoyed it, and as she sat toying with her second cup of coffee, she called the woman to her.

"Well, miss?"

"You work here for the chief?"

"Yes, miss."

"He gives you liberal wages?"

"Yes, miss, very."

"May I ask how much?"

"My husband is one of his Secret Service men, and he gets good pay, while I also receive liberal wages."

"I will give you hundreds of dollars if you will get me out of here."

"My dear lady, I could not do it if you gave me thousands, for each one of us in this Secret Service Corps is under the eye of others."

"I would not betray my master's trust for any sum; but did I so wish, I could not do it."

"You could certainly get me out of these rooms by night."

"No, miss, for when I open that door to go out it signals, by electricity, a dozen different points, and my every step is known."

"My God! have I gotten into an Inquisition?"

"You have gotten, miss, into a place which you can never go from without the free will of the chief."

"He sent you to me?"

"No, miss; the signal came when you were brought here last night, and I knew my duty was to come here and be your servant this morning, and so I came."

"And you are my keeper as well?"

"I suppose so, miss."

"Well, I am ready to see your chief," said Queen Ella, walking into the sitting-room.

The woman simply stepped to the door and turned the knob, then retraced her steps.

"Will you tell your chief now, please?"

"I have done so."

"When?"

"Just now, miss."

"You did not leave the room?"

"No, miss, nor can I until I am let out."

"I turned the knob, and the guard is here now."

As she spoke the door opened, and a man was seen without.

"Say to the chief that this lady would see him," said the woman, and passing through the door it closed behind her and Queen Ella was again alone.

"My heavens! what does this mean?" she cried.

Soon after a knock came upon the door.

"Come in!" she called out.

"You must turn the knob, lady, to permit my doing so," said a voice without.

She walked to the door and obeyed, and soon after the door opened, and a man stepped in.

He was dressed in a plain black suit, like a uniform, and wore a mask.

"You would see the chief, lady?"

"Yes, are you he?"

"He is here, lady," and stepping aside the man bowed, as the chief entered the room.

A man of slight stature, yet withal of great dignity, with long, snow-white hair and beard that gave him the look of a patriarch, and a suave, graceful mien, he bowed before the fair prisoner.

His complexion was ruddy and fresh, his eyes dark, penetrating and earnest in expression, and he was dressed in a suit of jet-black, the coat fitting tight to his waist, and simply the rim of a spotless collar showing behind, for the beard hid it in front.

Upon his breast, suspended by a gold chain of linked miniature handcuffs, hung a badge.

It was of onyx, and set in it were diamonds, representing a wreath of shackles, in the center of which was a gallows formed of rubies.

The reverse of this strange insignia of office was of solid gold in the shape of a Maltese cross.

"Be seated, sir," said Queen Ella, impressed, in spite of herself, with the dignity and calm power of the man, as he appeared.

"Thank you, lady; you are she that is known as Ella Leslie, Queen of the Crooks?" he said in a deep voice.

"I am, sir, so called, unfortunately, and you?"

"I am known as Ivan, the Wizard Detective Chief, lady."

"And I am your prisoner, sir?"

"You are not destined to remain so long, I hope, lady."

"It remains with you, sir."

"Rather with yourself," he said, with a smile.

"How so, sir?"

"Permit me to say that I was the one who dogged your husband to his den, and laid the snare into which he fell."

"I put the officers of the law upon his track, and they captured the band."

"Your husband I knew to be a most hardened villain."

"Sir!"

"There is no need, lady, of mincing matters between us, and I must call a spade a spade."

"Knowing just what your husband was, I know also just what you are."

"I know that you loved him with your whole soul, that you would not desert him, because you found, after you had married him, that he was an escaped convict, and all that was bad."

"He loved you, and he treated you well, so you clung to him."

"I know that you did all in your power to reform him, that you touched not a dollar of counterfeit money, and did no wrong, other than carrying in your heart the secret of guilt that was carried on under your eyes, your roof."

"I am aware that your husband promised you that, after his next issue of counterfeit bonds and bank-notes, he would fly with you to another land and live an honest life."

"I do not doubt but that he intended doing so, for he loves you, was fearful of arrest all the time, and his next sale of bogus money would have added to his ill-gotten gains until he had a fortune to live on, a fortune of honest money gained by a criminal issue."

"I could have given him the benefit of good intentions and allowed him to go; but look at the losses of innocent people thereby, look at the distress that vast issue of criminal bills would entail, and the thieves would go unwhipped of justice."

"So I had your husband and his band captured, and you, when you placed yourself under the shadow of prison walls, for you would be sentenced, too, I rescued you."

"And why?"

"To save you."

"I am nothing to you, sir."

"You are innocent of crime, and the guilty only should suffer."

"And you save me by bringing me to this gilded cage?"

"No, for you can return to your home in the West, where you have kindred and friends."

"You can say that you loved unworthily, and you can yet be happy."

"Not without him."

"But he must go to prison."

"I will rescue him, if I am away from here."

"That shall not be, lady."

"What am I to do?"

"Swear before our tribunal, a solemn oath to leave the city, and you shall go free."

"If I refuse?"

"You shall go to prison with the counterfeiters," was the stern reply.

"The choice rests with me?"

"It does, and you shall have just three days to decide."

"When you have come to a decision, after three days, lady, tell the servant who attends you, and she will give the signal."

"Good-morning," and the strange man bowed and left the room, while the woman muttered:

"I will go to prison and serve out my time, as my husband does, for I will never take the oath he demands!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE GODDESS OF JUSTICE.

It was the last day of the three, given by the Wizard Detective, for Queen Ella to decide whether she would take the oath, to leave New York and return to her home, giving up all claim to her wicked husband, or would remain, taking the consequences of his acts with him, and pretending to be alike guilty.

She had been treated most kindly by the attendant, her meals had been sumptuous, and every attention shown her; but she had come to realize that to escape from that gilded cage was an utter impossibility, for did she corrupt the woman with a bribe, to aid her, she could not leave the room without warning every one on duty in that strange house.

"I will not stay here! I will not go to prison! I will take the oath!" she said fiercely to herself, as the third day drew to its close.

She sprung to her feet, as she uttered the words, and paced to and fro like a caged lioness.

She had made a resolve, and she would abide by it.

So, when the attendant came in to prepare her six o'clock dinner, she said to her:

"I would see your chief."

"I will so make known," and the woman stepped to the door and turned the handle.

Soon the door opened and a man appeared.

"What is the wish of the lady?"

"To see the chief."

"Will she take the oath?" asked the man.

"Yes, I will," sharply responded Queen Ella.

"I will report to the chief your decision, lady."

And the guard retired.
In silence Queen Ella ate her dinner, her face dark and angry.

Soon after the woman was ready to leave, and at her touch on the door-knob it opened just as a knock came.

"The chief is here, lady," she said.

And the patriarchal man entered with a dignified bow.

"Lady, I have come at your desire," he said.

"Yes; I would die here, and I have decided."

"It is wise, for one of your nature would not live long behind the iron bars of a prison-cell."

"You will take the oath?"

"Yes, sir."

"It is well; the escort will come for you within an hour's time."

"Where am I to be taken?"

"To our court-room."

"I have to take the oath there?"

"Yes, lady."

"Will you accompany me?"

"No, lady; my mission ends this side of the court-room."

"I cannot understand all this," she said, in an anxious way.

"Lady, you are to be taken before our Queen, and she will administer the oath and the warning, while our jury will decide whether you are sincere or not."

The woman started, turned her head away from the light, and said:

"I will be ready, for I wish to have an end to this suspense and misery; but tell me of my husband."

"He and his fellow criminals are to be tried at once and their conviction will soon follow."

She bowed and the tears came into her eyes, while the Wizard Detective with a slight bending of his head in farewell, turned and left the room.

To and fro, to and fro paced the woman, wondering, watching, waiting for the coming of what the Wizard Detective had called the "escort."

A loud knock soon came, and in obedience to her response to enter the door flew open.

Three forms stood there, clad in black gowns, and with smooth-shaven faces which gave them a serious, clerical look.

One of the three stepped forward and said:

"We are ready, lady, to escort you to the tribunal vault."

"I am ready to go," was the reply, but there was a quiver in the voice, and the woman trembled slightly as she walked by the side of the man who had taken up his position upon her right, his two companions stepping behind them.

"Lady, you must wear this sightless mask," he said.

And it was placed upon her face, fitting her features closely, but allowing not the slightest view from beneath it.

Then he slipped his hand in her arm and they moved forward.

It seemed an endless, tortuous way, up and down stairs, along corridors, and through strange places; but at last it ended, and she was halted in a place that seemed chill and damp.

"Remove the mask!" said a stern voice, and this was done.

A dim light pervaded the place, and the woman glanced about her.

She saw a large, underground apartment, so it appeared, arched, and with low ceiling.

At one end was a doorway, with a black curtain, and through this she had been led.

Upon either side were seats, and fully two-score people accompanied them, all dressed in black, all with clean-shaven faces.

In the center of the ceiling hung a large lamp, and its rays alone lighted the dismal chamber.

At the other end of the vault was a raised platform, or dais, with a large chair in the center.

This chair was of gilt, and it held an occupant who will be spoken of at the proper time.

Upon the right of the chair were seated twelve men, all in deep black and wearing white masks, while upon their breasts, in white, was the hand of justice holding out a pair of scales.

Behind the twelve men was a gallows, of the old-fashioned kind, like the letter F, the noose hanging empty.

Upon the left of the chair sat a man in deep black, a book open before him, a pen in his hand.

He wore no mask and his eyes were turned upon the prisoner.

Behind this man, who appeared to be a court recorder, were two coffins, against the wall, one being white, the other black.

Across the latter in red letters was the word:

"INFAMY."

Across the white coffin was the word:

"INNOCENCE."

These things Queen Ella took in at a glance, and in dead silence.

Then she turned her eyes upon the occupant of the chair, and her gaze became riveted upon her face.

It was a young girl, scarcely over twenty, with a face that was full of power and very attractive.

Red-gold hair fell about her shoulders in wavy masses, and a crown of gold was upon her head, in the center being a star of rubies.

She was dressed in black and white, which presented a strange aspect, and her right foot rested upon a stool that appeared to be a human skull.

Her left hand clasped a wand of crimson and her right hand rested upon a book in her lap.

"Attention!" cried the deep voice of the recorder, and Queen Ella started, for already the silence was impressive.

"You are Madam Ella Leslie?" asked the recorder, in the same stern, deep tones.

"I am."

"Serving under the names of Queen Ella, and Queen of the Crooks?"

"I have been so called by my husband's band," answered the woman, striving to command her voice.

"You are guilty of no other crime than living unworthily, and our masked jury having so decided, you are, through the mercy of our Goddess of Justice, that sits here on her throne, allowed to go free, to seek your home, and your people, as soon as you have taken the oath, which you have said you are willing to subscribe to."

"Is such your desire, Ella Leslie?"

"It is."

"Advance and kneel then," and the speaker was the young girl in the gilded chair, her voice falling in strange contrast upon the ears of the one addressed, to what had the recorder's.

As she spoke the Goddess of Justice pointed with her wand to a black velvet cushion.

The woman advanced, knelt, and with bowed head waited, her heart beating so that she could hear it.

"Place your left hand upon this book," and the Goddess of Justice held out in her right hand the small Bible that had rested in her lap.

Silently the woman obeyed.

"Repeat aloud after me the oath!" and then in a distinct tone, and speaking slowly, the Goddess said, the other repeating after her:

"I, Ella Leslie, do hereby solemnly swear by all I deem holy, to leave New York city this night, and return to my people, leaving to their doom my husband, the Counterfeiter King, and his comrades who are guilty of crime with him."

"I swear this, so help me Heaven!"

The Goddess of Justice ceased, and the woman's words ended almost in a whisper.

Then the recorder said:

"Ella Leslie you are free, and when you return to your room your private papers and trunks will be there, for they were secured for you."

"Guard, return the lady to her room, and be ready to obey her bidding to depart, and see to it that she has proper escort to the train."

The escort bowed, and replacing the mask upon her, he led the woman back to her rooms.

There, to her surprise and pleasure, she found her trunks and some money she had left in her rooms, and soon after she was blindfolded and led in the same mysterious way out into the street.

In the vestibule the bandage was taken from her eyes, and she beheld by her side a stylishly-dressed gentleman, who raised his hat politely and said:

"I am to see you to the depot, madam, and your baggage will quickly follow."

She entered the vehicle without a word, and in silence rode to the ferry, crossing in the carriage, and was placed in the car by her escort, who then left her to procure her ticket and checks.

Soon he returned, her ticket to Chicago was given her, the section of a sleeping-car along with it, and the checks for her baggage.

"A pleasant and safe trip, madam," he said, as he raised his hat and turned away.

"Thank you, sir," was her only reply, and he had gone.

Then she buried her head in her hands and began to think.

Other passengers came in, but she did not notice them, and soon the train rolled out of the depot and went flying on its way westward.

Then the conductor approached and the woman started, and, by an effort of will, became calm.

"Conductor, I find it necessary to return to New York; here are my checks, so please put my trunks off at the next station."

"It is Sufferns, madam; will you stop there?"

"Yes."

"Then keep your Chicago ticket, and pay me only for the trip to Sufferns, madam."

This she did, and in half an hour the train came to a halt, and the woman stepped out upon the platform.

Giving an order to a man to take her baggage over to the hotel, she stood an instant gazing after the departing train, and then said passionately:

"No! no! no! my love is stronger than any oath man can form, or woman, too, and I will not leave you, Lawton, to your fate—I will save you!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

METAMORPHOSED.

IN a pleasant room of a fashionable hotel in New York city, several days after the Queen of the Crooks had been set free, and so strangely got off of the west-bound train at midnight, on the platform of a country station, a woman sat gazing out of the window.

She was tall, elegant in carriage, as she arose and walked across the room, and though her face was very pale, she was yet very beautiful—a beauty of a passionate, dangerous type for the possessor.

A knock came at the door, and a bell-boy entered at the woman's call.

She had seated herself, her face turned toward the window, and not toward the one who entered.

"The hairdresser is here, madam," said the boy.

"Bid him enter the other room."

The bell-boy led the way and departed, the hairdresser stood waiting, the woman locked the door, and then entered the room where the man was.

But she was masked.

Not a particle of her fair face was visible, an elastic holding a white mask over it.

The hairdresser bowed, and seemed surprised; but the woman asked:

"Can you keep your tongue between your teeth as to why you came here?"

"Oh yes, lady, all ze times I no say von word."

"Here is a fifty-dollar bill for you, and if I hear a whisper of why you are here, I will have you arrested for taking money under false pretenses."

"Oh, madam, I am ze last man to talk."

"Then act. I wish my hair cut off, and arranged in the style that young gentlemen of today wear theirs."

"Oh, madam! would ze lady cut off ze beautiful hair?"

"Yes, and lose no time about it."

The hairdresser got out his implements, and set to work.

He was a skilled workman, and soon did the work, while he said:

"Now madam has ze head of a young shentilmans."

"You have done your work well; but see that you say you came here to dress my hair, not to cut it, if you are asked."

"I have paid you, so good-day, sir."

The barber bowed, and gathering up his utensils, departed, muttering to himself:

"She vas so crazy as never vas."

"I wish me I could have had ze beautiful hair; it vas so long and zikken."

When the hairdresser had gone, the woman resumed her mask, but she did not look in the glass.

Entering another room she was absent some little while, and then there returned what appeared to be a young man, and a stylish one, too, for the suit was in the height of fashion, a pair of eye-glasses shaded the eyes, and a slouch hat sat jauntily upon the head.

"In this garb no one would ever know me, and I can act, and I will," she said, as she approached the mirror and gazed at herself from head to foot therein.

As darkness came on she left the room and sauntered out into the corridor, down the stairs and into the street.

Seeking another hotel, she registered her name, was shown to a pleasant room and then, sending for an expressman, gave him a note to go after her baggage.

"I have come here to stay until I have accomplished my purpose," she said, some time after, when her baggage arrived.

Upon the trunks was a name, seemingly freshly painted, and it read:

"REID ASHTON,
"Virginia."

Several days passed away and Mister Reid Ashton became a favorite with all who met him.

He was a pleasant fellow, generous, had money to spend, kept liquors and cigars in his room of the very best and seemed not averse to making acquaintances, affecting friendship with officials and lawyers.

It was but a short while before he began to pass his days in the courts, listening to dull trials, and especially did he seem to enjoy the trial of the Counterfeiter King and his associates in crime.

His legal friends secured for him a good seat, and said he was such a good listener and admirer of court scenes that he should study law as a profession.

"You really seem blue, now that the King of Counterfeiters and his gang are sentenced, Ashton," said an official in the court, who boarded at the same hotel and who had met the supposed young man quite often during the trial.

"I have nothing to do now I suppose is the reason," was the reply, and soon after came the remark:

"I believe I will study law."

"Not a bad idea, as you seem to have a taste

for stuffy court rooms and tedious trials," responded his friend.

"Who would be a good legal luminary here to read law with?" he asked.

"There are plenty of them, I assure you; but would you begin as office boy, and thus climb up the ladder?"

"Oh, no, for I have income enough to support me; but I would like to get into an office and make myself useful in legal writings, at the same time enter upon a course of study."

"Do you know lawyer Rogers?"

"I have seen him."

"Well, he is a rising young lawyer, and will soon be at the top-notch, for he is a brilliant orator, and well-read, while he argues a case in a masterly way; he would be a good man for you to be with, Ashton."

"Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes, and he is friendly toward me, and, I believe, needs an assistant."

"Come down to-morrow and I will take you over and introduce you."

"I'll come with pleasure, and shall not forget your kindness," was the reply.

The next morning the pretended Reid Ashton visited his friend at the court, and was taken over to the office of the lawyer and presented.

Bonnill Rogers received them kindly, heard the request, seemed to fancy the supposed young man, and said:

"I will be glad to have you with me, Mr. Ashton, for there is much office work you can aid me in, while I will also give you a line of reading to follow."

"Suppose you come next week, and make your hours from nine until four, for you must not confine yourself too much."

Thus it was arranged, and upon the day appointed the disguised woman entered the office of Bonnill Rogers, Esquire, who said to himself:

"Where have I seen that face before, or one strangely like it?"

But he could not recall when or where.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SAM CLAPP'S DISCOVERIES.

SAM CLAPP, alias Bull's-Eye in the profession, was a most thorough man in detective work, and when he went abroad it was with the intention of making an additional reputation for himself.

He had been given the papers in the Vertner mystery case, by Bonnill Rogers, and his instructions, with advice to study the matter thoroughly on his way across the ocean, and if he deemed a better course more available than the one suggested, to carry it out.

Upon reading the papers he came to the conclusion to begin at the beginning, and so, upon landing, departed at once for Portsmouth, England.

Here he took the trail of the Vertners, and a short work on the track convinced him that the attorney whom lawyer Rogers had intrusted with the case, had not done his duty.

Having gleaned every atom of information possible, regarding the mother of Maurice Vertner, and her marriage to his father, he then traced them up to the time of their death, and the boy to his running off to sea.

Then he set out for France, and soon landed in Nantes.

Speaking French fluently, he soon began work, and traced the ancestry of Maurice Vertner back for generations, and learned the cause of the father of the missing man having to leave France and seek an asylum in England, where he supported himself as a professor of languages in the Academy where he met and loved his pupil, whom he afterward made his wife.

It was his discoveries here that caused Detective Clapp to send the cablegram, of which the reader is cognizant, to lawyer Rogers, asking for the assistance in his work of Charity Kate, and to have her bring with her Mrs. Maurice Vertner.

Anxiously he awaited their coming; but he kept constantly at work, weaving together the threads that made the case complete, and a smile of triumph was upon his face when he went to the depot, in answer to Charity Kate's telegram, to meet them.

He was presented to Mrs. Vertner, young, pretty and anxious, and her first question was:

"Is my husband alive?"

"That is for you to decide, Mrs. Vertner, when you hear what I have to tell you," was the cautious response.

The lady gave a sigh, and entered the carriage, which drove them to the rooms which the detective had engaged for them.

Then, as they sat in their parlor that evening, they heard all that he had to tell.

"Did you ever hear your husband speak of being the descendant of a noble family?" asked Detective Clapp.

"Never!"

"Did he have much to say of his antecedents?"

"No, though he spoke of his mother and father, referring to both of them as English, and often laughed about his having been a runaway boy who had made a fair success in life."

"Do you remember that your husband was gloomy, or worried, before his disappearance?"

"Yes, he seemed troubled about something, yet never told me the reason."

"You believe that he loved you?"

"I am sure of it."

"And you love him?"

"Most devotedly."

"How did he regard money?"

"Oh, he was always fond of money."

"Generous?"

"Well, I can hardly say that, though he was not mean."

"You were rich, were you not?"

"My father was."

"Your husband knew this?"

"Oh, yes, for he was a clerk in my father's store."

"Did you hear your husband ever express a hope for wealth?"

"Oh, yes, and often, while he has cursed his poverty, and said he was born to be rich, and would know how to live like a prince if he got wealth."

"Mrs. Vertner, did you know that your husband had laid by any money up to the time of his disappearance?"

"No, sir, for I thought it took all we had to live, and I was surprised to know that he left five thousand dollars in the bank for me."

"Well, Mrs. Vertner, there has been a gentleman in this town who, from accounts, appears to be Mr. Maurice Vertner, your husband; but he is not here now, as he has gone to Paris, upon a most important mission to him, and thither we will go; but to-morrow I have something to show you, and when Mrs. Vassar has looked the matter squarely in the face, as I have, I wish for her opinion upon the subject; but you may rest assured, according to my belief, that you are not a widow."

"God bless you for those words, sir," said Mrs. Vertner, with feeling, and soon after she retired, leaving Charity Kate and the detective together.

For some moments a silence rested between them, and then Sam Clapp said, in a low tone:

"Kate, do you know why I sent for you to come here?"

"Mostly as an escort for Mrs. Vertner, I suppose," she answered.

"Oh, no, though I do not believe she could have come in better hands."

"But, Kate, do you recall on one occasion, when you were driving in the Park, that your horses took fright and ran away with you?"

"Can I ever forget it, for my coachman was killed, and I would have been, too, but for a brave gentleman who caught the horses and saved my life."

"I did it, Kate, and though you were a girl of eighteen then, I have not forgotten you."

"Sam Clapp, God bless you for that act, and how hard I tried to find you, that I might prove all I felt for the kind preserver of my life; but you rode quickly away, and I never knew who it was that saved me," and she extended both hands and grasped his own.

"I tried to save you another time, Kate."

"Ah! when was that?" she asked in surprise.

"Do you remember receiving a letter once, some six months after your runaway, signed 'A Friend' only, and telling you to beware of a foreigner who sought your hand?"

"Oh, yes, and would to God I had heeded the advice."

"I wrote that letter, for I kept my eye on you, and I saw that you were to marry a French noble."

"I tried to save you from him, for I had reason to believe he was a villain, and I sent you what proofs I could, but they were returned to me after having been opened, and with them I wrote you fully, giving my name and address."

"I never received any such letter, Sam Clapp."

"So I afterward believed, for the writing looked disguised, and I believe he got the papers in some way, and returned them, writing across my letter:

"Be good enough to let me manage my affairs without interference from others."

"Oh, Sam! I never wrote those words, I pledge you."

"I believe it now, Kate; but then I thought you had, and I felt bitter, and you married Gustave Armingnac, and your father dying a few days after, you got his wealth and your husband had all in his possession."

"As time went on, your property dwindled away, he telling you that he lost all in speculation, and within a year you had lost all but a small income left you by an uncle."

"Then your husband deserted you, and you were glad to be rid of him, went West and devoted yourself to teaching."

"Thus years passed, and you decided to return to New York, and while in a hotel heard the plot of men in an adjoining room to commit a great crime."

"You came to Chief Gordon with it, he gave you a position on the force, and you have been a splendid aide in the Secret Service ever since; but you give your all to the poor, and have

lived a noble life of self-sacrifice, well deserving the name the boys have given you of Charity Kate."

"Now, tell me if I have followed your career truthfully, Kate?"

"Indeed you have, Sam Clapp. But you have some strange motive in asking me to come here?"

"Yes."

"Tell it me."

"Your husband lives in Paris!" was the low response.

The woman started, turned pale, and then said:

"I believed him to be dead years ago."

"No; he so led you to believe, but it was not so, while he basely deceived you, as he did not lose your money in speculations, but put it away for himself, sent it to France, where it was invested for him, and he is now a very rich man and married!"

"Oh, no, no! he cannot be so base."

"He is, though, Kate; and I have proof that he robbed you of your money, and all that he took from you he must disgorge."

"You know this?"

"Yes, and more; in fact, I have been quite busy ever since I came over, and you and Mrs. Vertner are the very ones I need to pick up the end of certain chains of evidence which I have linked together."

"Now don't feel unhappy, for I feel that you never loved that man, but married him at the earnest entreaty of your father, who was ambitious to have his daughter wedded to a baron."

"He is not worthy of your feeling a pang, and when you get from him your fortune you can return to New York and live a life of luxury, doing much good in the world, and being happy in making the happiness of others, for such is your nature."

"Now good-night, and I will come in for you and Mrs. Vertner in the morning," and noble-hearted Sam Clapp took his leave.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CASTLES IN FRANCE TURNED TO "CASTLES IN THE AIR."

THE next morning Sam Clapp arrived, to find Mrs. Vertner and Miss Vassar greatly refreshed by a night's rest, but both anxious to begin the work of the day.

The three were soon seated in a carriage, which the detective had ordered, and were driving down the road bordering the river Loire, as Sam Clapp had said he had a point of interest to show them.

"Driver, whose place is that?" he called out, as a grand castle-like chateau came in sight.

"It is the Chateau Maurice, monsieur, but is called by the people Castle Maurice, on account of its having been in the style of a castle on the Rhine."

Mrs. Vertner started at the name, for, as she was a good French scholar she understood what was said, and all turned their eyes upon the structure.

It was indeed a castle, large, rambling, imposing, and with turrets and towers by the score.

The grounds were vast, and ornamental, a woodland park was upon one side, lawns and pleasure gardens upon the other, and the carriage drive passed by a lodge that was a miniature castle.

A twenty-franc piece gained admission for the carriage, for strangers were not admitted, and the concierge ran on to share his liberal fee with the man in charge of the chateau in the absence of the master.

The "generous Americans" were readily admitted, and they looked admiringly over the grand house.

"What is your master's name, my man?" asked Mrs. Vertner with considerable interest.

"Monsieur Le Comte Verdnon Maurice, madam," was the reply.

"He lives here all alone?"

"Oui, madam; but he is away in Paris at present, and we may hope for a grand lady to be mistress here soon," said the concierge with a smile.

"Has he lived here long?" and Mrs. Vertner spoke almost in a whisper.

"Ah, no, madam, the chateau has been vacant for many long years, for the heir could not be found."

"But at last he returned and claimed his inheritance and title, and fitted up the chateau in grand style as you see; but he spends most of his time in Paris; for it is so gay there for a young man."

"I will show you a painting of M. Le Comte, madam, when we visit the art gallery," and so the concierge ran on, as he showed the visitors over the palatial house.

At last the gallery was reached, and there were many fine paintings there, but Ruth Vertner's eyes were riveted upon a life-size portrait at one end of the room.

"That is Monsieur Le Comte's portrait, mesdames and monsieur, and it has just been completed and hung here; but is madam ill?" and he

* Now a chief of detectives in New York city, and one who has won fame in Secret Service work, and deserves it.—THE AUTHOR.

turned toward Mrs. Vertner, who had become faint and very pale.

"A glass of water, please," said Detective Clapp, and as the *conciierge* hastened away he asked:

"Is that your husband?"

"It is, Mr. Clapp," was the low reply.

"Then cheer up, for all will come well in the end, and we will go to Paris to-night and find him there."

The man now returned with the glass of water, and Mrs. Vertner felt refreshed by it, and they soon after took their leave, and that night started for Paris.

Securing pleasant quarters there, Detective Clapp left the ladies and started out on a tour of inspection.

He went to the prefect of police and what he discovered seemed to distress him, for his brow was clouded as he sprung into a *coupé* and gave the driver a number at which to set him down.

It was an elegant "apartment hotel," and he asked the *conciierge* for the rooms of M. Le Compte Maurice.

He was directed to the second floor, and a servant in livery answered his ring.

"Is M. Le Compte at home?"

"He is at breakfast, monsieur," was the reply.

"I desire to see him on a most important matter, so tell him I am from his chateau on the Loire."

"Oui, monsieur," and the servant ushered the visitor into an elegantly-furnished reception-room.

In a short while Count Verdon Maurice entered.

He was a handsome man, and a young one, with a vacillating look in his brown eyes, and a weak mouth, but a pleasant expression.

He was dressed in the height of fashion, wore a brilliant diamond in his scarf, an exquisite ruby on the little finger of his left hand, a watch-chain of unique workmanship and a seal with the arms of his house upon it.

"You are not Pierre from my chateau?" he said, in an affected way, twisting the ends of his waxed mustache.

"No, monsieur, I am Samuel Clapp, of New York city, United States of North America, and I have come all this distance to make the acquaintance of one Count Verdon Maurice, alias Maurice Vertner."

The count staggered back, white as a corpse, and sunk into a seat, quivering beneath the stern eye of the detective.

At last he murmured:

"I feared it all the while."

"Murder will out, count, and you played a bold game; but you lost."

"And you tracked me?"

"Well, yes, though I must confess I have been aided greatly in a mysterious way by some one who seemed to have solved the secret of your disappearance before."

"That some one has sent me letters of advice, when I was in England, mailing them there, and again in Nantes, and following the directions given, which happened to be my own views and intentions, I found you out."

"And why are you here?" and the count seemed to gain courage.

"Well, I have a warrant for your arrest, and I have received the sanction for it from the authorities here."

"My arrest?" he gasped.

"Oh yes, for you cruelly deserted your wife and children, and—"

"My poor Ruth! my poor little ones!"

"Oh yes, you feel it now, when the iron grip of the law is upon you."

"But a bad case can be made against you, count, for I know that you received a letter from an English attorney, who traced you down as the heir to Chateau Maurice, and other property, which your grandfather and father lost through confiscation for two generations."

"Your father married in England, under the name of Maurice Vertner, and you are the third generation and heir."

"This attorney wrote you, and in your wild bliss you kept the secret, deserted your family, led all to believe you had taken your own life, and went to England."

"There you bribed the attorney to cover up your tracks, took possession of your property, and in one month you were to marry a French lady of rank here, she little believing that you were a married man, and you asserting that you had been all these years a sailor, mostly cruising in Eastern seas."

"Now, Count Maurice, what have you to say for yourself?"

"I have this to say: that I have been a wretch, and utterly unhappy since I deserted my noble little wife and children."

"I was dazzled by the hope of winning some grand lady, and getting more wealth; but I have suffered bitterly, and longed to be once more in my little home."

"Well, count, you have a chance to return, and carry your wealth with you, or go back under arrest."

"You can write to the lady who expects to become Countess Maurice that you have changed your mind, or tell her what you please, and you

can leave your estates in the hands of your agents here to settle up for you, or can remain here if you so desire; but your wife is here in Paris, and—"

"My wife! oh, take me to her at once."

"Go slow, count, for if you decide to be square toward her, I do not wish her to know of this intended alliance of yours, and bless her noble heart, let her think a lie if it will make her happy, and believe that you intended to surprise her in the end."

"She may come here to live, but I doubt it, for she is a true American woman, and—"

"No, no, I would not dwell here for any consideration, and besides my secret would be found out."

"No, I will leave Paris at once, go to my chateau and arrange for my departure, and return to America with my wife, living plain Verdon Maurice, which is my real name, changed by my father to Maurice Vertner."

"I will dispose of my property here, and remain an American, so take me at once to my wife, and Heaven bless you for what you have done, and also for the plot to keep me out of my intended alliance."

"Oh, I've simply done my duty, count."

"Don't count me, I beg of you."

"Well, Mr. Maurice, we will now go to where your wife is, and I assure you I could kick one of these Paris policemen from very joy, for this little detective work of mine is the triumph of my life."

"Come, sir," and soon after Detective Clapp poked his head in the door of the sitting-room where sat Mrs. Vertner and Mrs. Vassar.

"Queen Bee Kate, can I see you a moment?" he asked.

"Is anything wrong?" cried Mrs. Vertner.

"Oh, no, only a gentleman to see you, and I called Kate out."

"That is all," and as Mrs. Vassar came out of the door Detective Clapp gently shoved Verdon Maurice in.

A glad cry in a woman's voice, a word of endearment in the deep tones of a man, and husband and wife were united, while Sam Clapp said to Kate, as she stood in the hallway with him:

"Kate, that Secret Service job is done, and now to attend to your case."

"You say my husband is here?"

"Yes, here in Paris, and I have his address from the prefect of police," was the quiet rejoinder of the detective.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A BARON AT HOME.

THOUGH in a foreign land and surrounded by insurmountable difficulties, Sam Clapp seemed in his element in getting at the bottom facts of the cases he had undertaken.

For Mrs. Vertner he had felt a deep interest, for he knew that she had been cruelly deceived by her husband, and he saw a means of uniting them by playing upon the fears of Verdon Maurice.

With the humble tastes with which he had been reared, the young husband really found little pleasure in gay Paris life, though he was anxious to possess riches, and he quickly told his wife that his intention was to dispose of his property and return with her to the United States as soon as he could do so and the detective was ready to go.

For Kathleen Vassar Detective Clapp had a friendship that was very strong, for it was begun on the day that he had saved her life years before.

He had taken an interest in the young and beautiful girl, and, though keeping himself unknown to her, had watched her unfortunate and unhappy career closely.

He had seen her marry the scamp he had warned her against and then return to New York, years after, a deserted wife robbed of her fortune.

To satisfy himself, he had worked up the career of her husband and discovered just how she had been robbed.

Then she had appeared at the Secret Service headquarters and proven herself a valuable ally for detective work, and he saw much of her, though she never dreamed that he knew her, so well did he guard her secret.

Upon going to France he had, in working upon the Maurice case, run upon her husband, whom he recognized, and at once he sought to discover all he could about him, for he was aware that Kathleen Vassar believed him dead.

He started the machinery of the French detective service in motion, and soon discovered all that he cared to know, and thus cabled to have the Queen Bee Detective come over with Mrs. Vertner.

Having told Mrs. Vassar that he intended to look up her husband, the daring and skillful Secret Service man returned to his *coupé* and was driven to a villa in the environs of Paris.

To his inquiry of the servant, as to whether Monsieur Le Baron Gustave Armingnac was in, he was told that he was, and he sent in a card upon which was printed:

"M. LE COMPTE VERDON MAURICE,
"Chateau Maurice,"

"NANTES."

Instantly he was ushered from the reception-room to the elegant library of Monsieur Armingnac.

That gentleman was seated before a cheerful fire, reading, when the card came in.

He was a striking-looking man, with hair and mustache tinged with gray, a dark, stern face, glittering rather than brilliant eyes, and an expression of insincerity stamped upon both mouth and chin.

His home was a princely one, and he looked like a man who enjoyed life to his full bent, and was selfish in the extreme to his own comfort and luxury.

A baron without an estate, he had been almost a pauper until he had married an American heiress, and a second time wedded an immense fortune, so that he lived in princely magnificence.

He arose politely as his visitor entered, for he had heard of Count Maurice, and had been anxious to meet him.

"Ah, M. Le Compte, I am glad to have the honor of a call, though it was your due from me that I should have first called upon you," he said, advancing and holding out both hands, in his earnest, French way.

Quick as a flash he found his wrists in steel handcuffs, instead of having his hands grasped by the supposed count, and Sam Clapp said in English, and in a voice not to be mistaken:

"Sit down there, Gustave Armingnac, and make no fuss, or it will be the worse for you."

The man turned livid and glared in silence upon the detective.

After a moment he said:

"Mon Dieu! you are not M. Le Compte Maurice?"

"No, I borrowed that card from Count Maurice to play it on you."

"I am plain Sam Clapp, of Gordon's Secret Service League of New York, and your having those bracelets on proves that I mean business, so calm down and we'll have a little talk together as soon as I have locked the door."

As he spoke the detective stepped to the door and turned the key in the lock.

Then he returned to his prisoner, for such he was, and who had not spoken, but remained seated in a dazed kind of a way.

"Armingnac, now I have introduced myself to you, I have something to say to you."

"Go on," and he spoke in English, with slight accent.

"Fifteen years ago you came to New York a French pauper, for you were nothing more."

"You had a *bona fide* title of baron, true; but no money to back it up, while your debts in Paris were many."

"You ingratiated yourself into the good will of a weak old man, who had made a fortune, and you married his only child, and thus gained possession of her fortune at the death of her father."

"You lied to her about losing her money in speculations, and robbed her of it, and then deserted her, and pretended to have been massacred on the plains with a hunting-party that was surprised by Indians, and a paper so stated."

"But with Kathleen Vassar's fortune you went to South America, made more money there, then to Australia, and next you returned to Paris, and here you paid your debts, married a wealthy lady, and are living a lie before the world."

"Now your first wife lives, and is poor, and unless you give her back every dollar you took from her I will carry you back to America as a bigamist and a robber."

The Frenchman had regained his nerve while the detective spoke, and he said with a sneer:

"Your name is what, monsieur?"

"Sam Clapp, sir."

"Well, Monsieur Sam Clapp, just remove these irons from my wrists, for I happen to understand both American and French law, and know that you have no power to take me away, or even to arrest me here."

"I married an American girl, yes, but she was not of age then, so it was illegal, and she left the place which I made for her home, and hence deserted me."

"I made a fortune in South America, yes, and I lost my wife's inheritance in the United States."

"I came home, and I am married, and no law can touch me, so do your worst, monsieur."

Sam Clapp was nonplused, but he did not show it.

He saw that he had a bold, bad man to deal with, and that he meant to fight the law, so he thought he would retire for a consultation with Kathleen Vassar.

But he said boldly:

"Baron Gustave, you have played a bold and wicked game, and I have the power to make you suffer, and, unless you agree to my demands I will return to-morrow and prove the power I hold over you."

The Frenchman laughed, a mocking laugh, and Sam Clapp stepped forward and removed his irons.

Then he said:

"Baron, I demand for your wife every dollar you stole from her, and if you are not ready to

grant my demand when I call to-morrow, you must be prepared for the worst."

"I will be, monsieur," was the sneering remark, and the detective left the villa.

Arriving at his coupé, he saw a man standing near, as though awaiting him.

He did not have the look of a Frenchman, was tall, slender, and wore a heavy beard.

He was well dressed, and looked the gentleman.

"Mr. Clapp, I presume?" he said in English.

"Yes, sir; and you?"

"Names are of little consequence, sir, so call me Monsieur Ivan, and permit me to say that I have sent you several communications since your arrival abroad."

"Ah! you are my unknown correspondent, then?"

"I am."

"And I owe you thanks; but can there be a Detective Ivan here, and Invisible Ivan a detective in the United States, too?" and Samuel Clapp regarded the man attentively.

"Many things are possible, monsieur, that are deemed supernatural; but may I ask the result of your interview with M. Le Baron?"

"In regard to what?"

"Did he agree to the demands you doubtless made upon him?"

"How do you know I made demands?"

"I know that he married an American lady, and that he was then poor."

"He is now rich, and he is married again, while his American wife is with you in Paris, so it is but natural that she should demand her rights, or make him suffer if he refuses."

"You are certainly well posted, monsieur."

"It is my business to be, Detective Clapp, and so I am also aware that Count Maurice has taken a wise course and returned to his wife."

"Ah!"

"Yes, sir, and I ask if you failed with the baron, for if so, I will beg you to return to his villa with me, and I assure you that I will not fail."

"By Heaven, I have half a mind to try you," and Sam Clapp did not know what to make of his mysterious companion.

"Come, monsieur," and taking the detective's arm he led the way back through the grounds to the villa.

"The baron will see no one," said the servant.

"He is mistaken; he will see me, if you will hand him this," said the stranger, with a smile, and he unpinned a badge from his breast and handed it to the servant, who seemed to recognize its power, for he bowed low and departed.

A moment after he returned and said:

"M. Le Baron will see you, monsieurs," and again he bowed with great deference, as though to some high dignitary, and ushered the visitors into the presence of his master.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BROUGHT TO TERMS.

THE baron stood near the fire, in his library, examining the badge which his servant had handed to him, and which had proven an "open sesame" to his august presence, to the surprise of Detective Clapp, who was becoming more and more convinced that his strange companion was no ordinary personage.

As the visitors entered the brow of the baron was dark, and his lips stern.

He glared at the two, and said haughtily, as he recognized Sam Clapp:

"Why are you come again, sir?"

"At my invitation, Monsieur Le Baron."

"Pardon me if I take back my badge," and the man who had given his name as Monsieur Ivan, took from the hands of the surprised and angry nobleman the little gold trinket.

"Who are you, sir?" sternly said the baron.

"One whom that badge proves, as an insignia given me by the prefect of police, has the right to ask you a few questions, Baron Gustave Armingnac," replied the one addressed.

"I have no desire, monsieur, to disregard the passport of the prefect of police, nor to be discourteous to you; but that person, an American, has just left me, having been here threatening divers terrible things, if I do not do certain acts that will benefit him, and trumping up old charges against me of my youthful escapades in a foreign land."

"This gentleman comes as my friend, M. Le Baron, and I wish him to hear what passes between us," was the firm response, and, seeing that his strange friend held a trump card of some kind, Sam Clapp coolly took a seat.

The Frenchman frowned, and said with anger:

"Am I to be insulted in my own house in this way, by an officer of the law when I have broken no law of France?"

"Baron Gustave, you have just hit it; you have broken no law of France, but of America."

"Bah! a country of barbarians," was the contemptuous response.

"You wedded one, sir, and there got your money."

"This bickering is unbearable, so, if you have business with me out with it, as I have an important engagement," and the Frenchman looked at his watch.

"Sit down, M. Le Baron, for your engagement must wait, while we talk over an affair of such importance to you, that your life hangs upon it."

There was that in the eyes of the man calling himself Monsieur Ivan that seemed to read the Frenchman's inmost soul, and the latter grew strangely nervous under the look bent upon him.

"Sit down, baron," continued Ivan, and the man obeyed mechanically.

Then his inquisitor took a seat near, and said in a distinct but low tone:

"I hope you will allow me to question you here, M. Le Baron, and answer promptly and truthfully, and not force me to take you before the prefect to be catechized."

"The prefect is my friend, and—"

"The prefect of police is the friend of no man, baron, against whom crime can be proven."

The Frenchman winced, and then said:

"I will hear what you have to say."

"You are a very rich man, monsieur."

"I am."

"Worth, say, a couple of million dollars, or ten million francs?"

"That is my affair, sir," was the haughty response.

"You will be forced to answer before the prefect, baron, so save trouble by answering here."

"I am worth all of that."

"May I ask what fortune you got with your present wife?"

"Half a million dollars."

"You made as much in South America, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And about how much did you add to your fortune in Australia and India?"

"Some half a million dollars."

"Then, according to your own estimate, of being worth two million dollars, one-fourth of which you got with your present wife, one-fourth made in South America, and as much more made in Australia and India, you got the basis from your American wife?"

"I lost her money in speculation."

"Pardon me, you did not; but you said so."

"Now, baron, you are worth more than you say, but we will argue from your own figures, and say you received from your American wife bonds, bank accounts and real estate valued at half a million—is that too high?"

"It was about that."

"Well, you went to New York a pauper, sold a paid-up insurance policy for twenty thousand on your life, getting half that sum for it, and on that money you splurged, to use an Americanism, and won a wife worth half a million."

"It was a good investment."

"Now, baron, it is fifteen years since you married Miss Kathleen Vassar, and at six per cent. per annum, you can figure for yourself, the amount on half a million would be just four hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"This large interest almost equals the principal, and makes your indebtedness to your wife just fifty thousand less than a million dollars."

"*Sacré!* to what does all this tend?" cried the infuriated Frenchman.

"To your giving your wife a check on your bankers for that sum, for you have much more than that in their hands in securities."

"But the baroness does not wish the money, monsieur."

"She does; and this gentleman is authorized to receive the check for her and receipt for the same."

"Make it payable to Madam Kathleen Vassar, Baroness Armingnac."

The Frenchman was on his feet, white with rage.

"*Mon Dieu!* do you think me a fool?"

"Do you think I shall pay one sou to that woman?"

"Not I, although I am worth more than two million dollars."

"But, yes; I will give to her a check for one hundred thousand francs, *francs*, mind you, not dollars, and take her quit claim against all else I can be held to do."

"You will pay the sum I demand, baron," was the cool response.

"*Never! never! never!*" almost shrieked the Frenchman.

"Keep cool, M. Le Baron, and do not alarm your household and have them see your downfall."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, baron, that if you sign that check, say for one million dollars, for there are some expenses attached to this affair that you should pay for, I will see that you have a quit-claim against further trouble."

"Bah! you can get no French law to hold me for having married an American girl, under age, and who deserted me."

"Baron, this gentleman is fingering there in his pocket a pair of steel handcuffs, and they will fit your wrists, while I have a requisition from the United States for one Gustave Armingnac, Baron of Montgraves."

"You can do nothing with me, monsieur, and

I shall drive now to the prefect and report all."

"You will drive there in irons, and I will report to the prefect the cause of the death of Adrian Vassar, your wife's father!"

A groan burst from the baron's lips and he sunk back in his chair, his head falling forward upon his chest.

"He has fainted; bring me that decanter of brandy," calmly said the stranger.

And Sam Clapp seized the liquor which stood upon a table near.

Pouring some in his hand, Monsieur Ivan bathed the face of the baron with it, and placed a silver urn of water to his lips.

In a moment he began to revive, and soon looked about him.

"*Mon Dieu!* what has happened?" he said, in a faint voice.

"We were talking business, baron, and you fainted."

"You remember you were just going to accept my proposition for the million dollars, in favor of Baroness Kathleen Armingnac, in return for which she was to send you divorce papers, upon reaching America, which she can readily get, keep your dark secret, you know, and give you a quit-claim against all that you might be liable for."

"This will end all claims, prosecutions and persecutions against me?"

"From the baroness, yes, and from this gentleman, and others in her behalf."

"I will give you the check, when you have drawn me up a paper to that effect."

"I will draw up the paper, baron, sign it, and have this gentleman go to the baroness's hotel and get her signature—"

"She is here, then?"

"Oh yes, for we came for business, you know."

"Then call to-morrow with her signature, and I—"

"No, my dear baron, Monsieur Clapp will go now and get her signature, and when he returns we will all three drive down to the Bourse and you can just hand to monsieur here the check, certified there by your bankers."

Baron Armingnac was in a corner, and he submitted in silence.

A paper was hastily drawn up by Sam Clapp, and then read aloud.

"Is that satisfactory, baron?"

"Yes."

"Then while we sign it, just call in Madame Armingnac, your so-called wife, your butler, and I will summon the driver of the coupé, as witnesses."

"*Mon Dieu!* would you ruin me?"

"Not a word shall be said, baron, other than that it is a matter of witnessing signatures in regard to some American affairs of yours that you are closing up."

"But why the baroness?"

"You mean the lady who is called baroness by courtesy, and who, fortunately for herself, does not know how she has been deceived?" said Sam Clapp.

The baron looked black, but seeing that argument was useless, a servant was summoned to request the presence of the baroness, and another was dispatched to call the butler and then go out to stand by the coupé-driver's horse while he came in.

Soon all were assembled, and a strange scene it was, the baron pretering to be jovial over the matter, to deceive the lovely French lady he had wronged, and allay suspicions.

The paper was then duly signed by the three men, but was not read aloud, and while Sam Clapp hurried away with it for the signature of the real baroness, Kathleen Vassar, Monsieur Ivan remained with the baron, and chatted away, not once referring to the unpleasant affair between them.

Within the hour Detective Clapp returned, the signature of "Kathleen, Baroness of Montgraves, *née* Kathleen Vassar, of New York City, U. S. America," was attached, and the three men drove to the baron's bankers, where a bill of exchange for the sum of one million dollars was given on New York, and the Frenchman went his way, leaving the Americans together.

"So he really killed old man Vassar to get his money?" said Sam Clapp, as the baron drove off in his carriage.

"It would seem so from the emotion he showed when accused of it; but I did not know it, only shot at random and hit dead center; but good-by."

"You are not surely going to leave me, for you will go up and meet the baroness," said Sam Clapp, with surprise.

"Oh, no, for I have other duties to look after now."

"You see to it that the baroness gets her divorce as soon as she returns, so that it will put the good lady who now believes herself his wife upon a proper footing."

"I will attend to it; but you—"

"Good-by, Monsieur Clapp; some day we may meet again," and with a grasp of the hand the mysterious stranger raised his hat, wheeled on his heel and walked away, leaving the detective amazed and hurt at his unaccountable behavior.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FROM OVER THE SEA.

REID ASHTON, the young law reader in the office of Bonhill Rogers, proved himself invaluable in a very short while, and the lawyer became very much attached to him.

He wrote a bold, legible hand, was ever ready to assist in all work, took an interest in all pertaining to the law, and several times the lawyer said to Chief Gordon, who daily dropped in to see him:

"That young fellow will make a bit yet."

"He's as bright as a new dollar, that is certain," replied the chief, and then he asked:

"Any news?"

"Not a word; have you anything?"

"No, and yes, for some of my men have been greatly aided of late in clearing away certain work that bothered them, and that Wizard Detective is at the bottom of it, I am sure."

"He still continues to serve you?"

"Oh, yes, in an anonymous way, for suggestions and advice come from him; though no name is signed, it is his handwriting, and he is almost invariably right; but is it not time for a letter from Clapp?"

"Yes; and I just sent my boy over for my letters, as we get the European mail this morning; here he comes now."

"And you have a big mail," said The Hornet, as the boy laid the mail down on the lawyer's desk.

"Yes; but nothing foreign, though here is a letter in a handwriting you know."

"The Wizard's?"

"Yes; so we will see what he has to say."

And reading aloud the lawyer continued:

"DEAR SIR:—

"It gives me pleasure to inform you that your excellent envoy to Europe, has been more than successful in his undertaking, and will return at once, along with Mr. and Mrs. Verdnon Maurice and the Baroness of Montgraves, late alias Charity Kate and the Queen Bee Detective.

"I hope soon to give you an important communication.

"Permit me to urge the promotion of Detective Clapp, as a man well worthy of all confidence, and a word from you to Chief Gordon would help Bull's Eye as he deserves.

"With respect,

"INVISIBLE IVAN."

"This is certainly good news," said The Hornet, and he added:

"I certainly will push Sam Clapp to the front, for he well deserves it, and the name he won of Bull's Eye was given him as he could see through dark cases so well and throw more light upon a subject than a dozen other men."

"But Sam should have written," said lawyer Bonhill Rogers.

"No need, when I come in person," was the prompt response.

And in the open door appeared Detective Sam Clapp, while behind him was Mrs. Vassar, and then appeared in sight the fugitive husband and his happy wife.

The lawyer and the detective chief sprang to their feet and gave the party a warm welcome, being also introduced to Verdnon Maurice.

"We just had a line from Invisible Ivan that you were coming," said lawyer Rogers.

"I left him on the other side, and he helped me greatly," said Sam Clapp.

"Left Invisible Ivan on the other side of the Atlantic?"

"Yes, chief."

"Then he is in two places, for he is here."

"Chief, that man is the deepest well I know, for he's past finding out, as you will see when I tell you all."

And Sam Clapp told of his discoveries abroad, but put the flight of Verdnon Maurice in the light of his having intended a surprise for his wife, and spoke of the pleasant few days they had all passed at Chateau Maurice, which had now been sold with the count's other property, he preferring to be an American citizen to a French noble.

The wonderful fortune that had come to Kathleen Vassar was also told, though the real means that had forced Baron Armingnac to disgorge her stolen property Sam Clapp had kept a secret even from her, the fear of being arrested as a bigamist being the supposed reason of his giving up the fortune.

In all, the generous-hearted detective gave Monsieur Ivan full credit for what he had done, but Chief Gordon realized his good nature and said:

"Sam, you have done so well, you shall be second commander of the League, for Fuller's withdrawal leaves it vacant."

"I thank you, chief."

And Sam Clapp bowed, appreciating fully the compliment.

"And, Mr. Rogers, I wish to place in your hands my divorce case, and have you get at it at the earliest possible moment and forward notification to Baron Armingnac at his banker's address, while, Chief Gordon, I must tender you my resignation as a Secret Service woman, as I no longer have need to work for a living; but in my new home, which I will soon have, I hope to see my old friends and comrades, for at heart I shall still remain Charity Kate.

"When I have deposited my bill of exchange,

I will send you a check to divide among the League, as I wish them to benefit a trifle, at least, in my good fortune."

And Mrs. Vassar was about to say farewell and depart with Verdnon Maurice, when a messenger entered hastily with a letter for lawyer Rogers.

"The Wizard again!" he said, as he tore open the envelope.

"Here, Gordon, this is for you to act upon, and quickly, too, for there is not a moment to lose," he said, as he handed the letter to the chief, who glanced at it and, accompanied by Sam Clapp and lawyer Rogers, hastily left the office, the manner of the three showing that there was something of unusual importance on hand.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

PLOTTED WELL, BUT COUNTER-PLOTTED BETTER.

THE letter which lawyer Rogers had received by a messenger and so promptly acted upon was short and to the point.

It read:

"3:30 P. M.

"LAWYER BONHILL ROGERS:—

"Sir:—Send at once to Chief Gordon and have him go with a couple of detectives to meet the 6:30 train of the Hudson River Railroad, due at Harlem Bridge at six o'clock.

"When it slack up an instant before crossing, let them get on board, and the chief *in disguise* go through the train to look for a party of four men, two of whom he will recognize.

"Let him show no sign of recognition, but post his men and be ready to make an arrest when the train reaches the depot.

"Act promptly and accomplish much.

"IVAN, THE INVISIBLE."

About the time that the lawyer and the two detectives left the office a scene was transpiring elsewhere in which they were interested, and it shall be presented to the reader.

A man in the garb of a convict sat at a desk bending over a book and with pen in hand.

He was in his cell, which had ample light in it for his work, and his chair was not an uncomfortable one.

It was Lawton Leslie, the Counterfeiter King, whose copper-plate style of writing had gained him a position in Sing Sing prison as a book-keeper.

His face wore its reckless, determined look still, and as he worked his eyes seemed to be gazing into the future with hope.

The clanking of keys was heard and his door was thrown open, a keeper appearing.

"You are wanted," was all he said.

And he led him to the office of the prison.

There he beheld three strangers to the prison, one of them being in conversation with the officer in charge.

"That is convict Leslie, sir, and you can see if he will be of any use to you," said the officer, addressing the gentleman with whom he was conversing.

The one to whom he spoke turned and looked at the prisoner and said:

"You are Lawton Leslie, are you not?"

"I was; now I am Convict Number 200," was the reply.

"Ah! it is with you as Lawton Leslie that I have to deal, for you have certain knowledge regarding the case of Vertner vs. Vertner that I wish to know about, as I come from the defendant in the trial that goes on to-morrow morning."

"I know of the case," was the reply.

"For or against the defendant?"

"In favor of the defendant my testimony would be."

"I have here the official papers that admit of my taking you to New York to-night, to appear as a witness to-morrow."

"Are you willing to go?"

"Yes; although it will be fearful to have to return from freedom to the grave," was the bitter reply.

"There will be no freedom for you, as you go handcuffed, though in citizen's dress, and these gentlemen will see to your safety as well as your comfort."

And he pointed to the two others in the room who were strangers.

"Is he at liberty to go now, sir, so that we can catch the down-train, and have the lawyers get a chance to talk with him to-night?" and the gentleman turned to the officer in charge.

"Yes, sir, he can go now," was the reply, and an attendant brought out a suit of clothing for him to put on, after which one of the men stepped forward and fastened a pair of handcuffs upon him.

Then the four took the carriage in waiting and drove to the depot in ample time to catch the down-train.

As the train came to a momentary halt at the Harlem Bridge four men sprang upon the rear platform.

One of these was Bonhill Rogers, another Sam Clapp, a third Ferret, and the fourth wore a heavy beard, muffler about his neck and a slouch hat that almost completely hid his face.

The other three stopped in the rear car, while the man so well protected from cold, walked forward, going slowly from car to car.

At last his eyes fell upon the party from Sing Sing, but he did not appear to notice them, and passed back and joined his friends.

"I have a surprise for you, Mr. Rogers," he said quietly.

"Well?"

"You gave your young assistant a holiday to-day?"

"Yes."

"He is in the second car forward."

"Ah, with a girl?"

"No, with three men."

"Is he one that the Wizard said that you would recognize?"

"Yes."

"And the others?"

"Two of them are ex-policemen, discharged for irregular actions a week ago."

"And the fourth?"

"You won't tell?"

"Oh, no."

"Is Lawton Leslie, the Counterfeiter King."

"You don't mean it, Gordon?"

"I do, and I now know who your assistant is, and knew I had seen before."

"Better a cool hundred it's his wife in breeches," said Sam Clapp.

"You are right, Mr. Reid Ashton is none other than Ella Leslie, the Queen of the Crooks, and she has, in some way, gotten that husband of hers out of prison."

"The Wizard knows how, I'll guarantee."

"Yes; but come, we must get near them, for we will soon be at the depot," and the party moved forward into the rear of the car where sat the daring woman, Ella Leslie, her escaped husband and the two pretended officers of the law whom she had bribed for the bold plot to rescue the Counterfeiter King.

Knowing now who she is the reader will readily understand why she got off of the Western bound train at Sufferns Station, and, assuming a man's disguise, cultivated the acquaintance of those about the City Hall and lawyer's office, for thereby she obtained blanks, letter-head paper, a knowledge of signatures, the secret use of the seals, and all that was necessary for her bold plot.

As the locomotive rolled into the depot Chief Gordon stepped up alongside of the woman, who sat on the inner side of the car, her husband beyond her, and one of the pretended officers in the seats before and behind them.

Lawton Leslie was still handcuffed, but he felt no fear of capture, as his loving wife had so well planned and executed all.

He had recognized her by the look she gave him at the prison, and he had chimed in with her questions about being a witness, knowing her bent.

As the shadows of the depot fell upon the train he felt safe; but just then the chief took his stand by the woman's side, Sam Clapp stepped into the seat in front, Ferret into the one behind, and lawyer Rogers stood near.

"You are my prisoners, so make no trouble."

"I am Gordon, the detective," said the chief, in a low tone.

And he laid his hand upon the woman's shoulder.

Marble is not whiter than she turned, and in an instant her hand was upon a pistol in an overcoat pocket; but Sam Clapp's hand grasped hers with a grip of iron, and with a cry of pain she released the weapon and The Hornet took it out of her pocket, while he said:

"It is useless, so submit."

In the bustle of getting out, as they sat in the center of the car, the other passengers, going each way to the doors, never even observed the little by-play transpiring, and as the woman was handcuffed in an instant, the Counterfeiter King, being already in irons, offered no resistance.

He turned pale, but showed no other emotion, while the two pretended officials were covered very quickly and the bracelets were slipped upon them with great celerity by Sam Clapp and Ferret.

"Mr. Rogers, I ordered the carriages at the other end of the depot, so we will go there," said Chief Gordon.

And the party started off, entered the waiting vehicles, which rolled rapidly away downtown toward the prison.

"I have played my hand and lost," said the woman, in a low tone.

"You played a desperate game, and, as your love was the prompter, I pity you, for you have but placed yourself in the position of your husband, and, having committed forgery and other crimes, I advise you to plead guilty, ask for sentence and accept your fate," said lawyer Rogers.

"I shall do as you suggest, sir, for I am in your hands," was the reply of the woman, and she bade her husband farewell, for Ferret was to return that night with the Counterfeiter King to prison.

"Some day in the future, Lawton, we may meet again, and then, having sinned and suffered, we will be that much dearer to each other, and can start the life that is left to us in an honest way," said the woman, in a low, earnest tone.

"For your sake I will, Ella, for you deserve

it; good-by," and thus they parted—perhaps to meet again in the future, and be happy in the love that lasts, for, in punishment for her crime of forgery and rescue, the Queen of the Crooks was sent to prison for a term, but two years shorter than the sentence of her husband, while her allies in the rescue also received fitting sentences.

"And we owe this too, to Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective," said lawyer Bonnell Rogers, addressing Chief Gordon, as the two, now most intimate friends, walked away from the courtroom, after the sentence of Ella Leslie and the two fraudulent officers.

"Yes, and he is more of a mystery to us now than ever," was the reply of The Hornet.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A UNIQUE DAGGER.

A MAN stood looking into the tempting show-window of the well-known jewelry establishment of Lindo Brothers, on Broadway.

His gaze was fixed upon a unique dagger displayed for sale in the window, and the oddity of the weapon was such as to attract any eye.

The man was well dressed, and his air was that of a gentleman, to the casual observer, but a close reader of human nature would have said that he assumed the bearing, and had not been accustomed to polite society.

His face wore a haggard look, and he looked like one who suffered from insomnia.

"How came that weapon there, I wonder?" he said, in a hoarse whisper, his eyes still riveted upon the dagger.

"An odd weapon, is it not?" said one who stood by his side.

The man started, looked at the stranger, and saw a man with long gray beard, almost snow-white hair and bent form.

But he was well dressed, wore a diamond in his shirt and a handsome watch-chain.

"Yes, it is odd," was the answer.

"I always am attracted to a jeweler's window," the old man said, adding:

"I frequently make purchases of pretty little trinkets, for I have plenty to give them to."

"You are a stranger in New York?" said the young man.

"I'm from Texas," was the reply.

"Well, now I know something about that weapon, for I have seen it before, and was wondering how they got it here."

"Has it a history?"

"It has, for it is the dagger that Carson Kenedy killed Luke Brown with a year ago, and he was hanged for the murder last September."

"Indeed! it has a history, and I'll go in and buy it, for I like *souvenirs*."

The old man started into the store, the other following him, and he asked Mr. Lindo, who stepped forward to wait upon him:

"Will you show me that odd dagger you have in your window?"

"Certainly, sir," and it was placed in his hand.

"May I ask where you got it?"

"I purchased it of a court official, to whom it was given by a man who was hanged for making too free use of it," replied Mr. Lindo, adding, by way of explanation:

"He got married, he said, and his wife wished him to sell it, and he brought it to me."

"May I ask its price?"

"Twenty-five dollars, sir, and it cost far more."

"I do not doubt it, sir, and I will take it," and the old gentleman took out a large roll of bank-notes and paid for the dagger.

Mr. Lindo had put it in a case for him, and he left the store, turning to his companion as he did so, and saying:

"As you were the means of my purchasing an article which I will prize most highly, I would like to ask you to dine with me at the Hoffman House, and have you tell me all you know about this murder case."

"Certainly, sir," eagerly said the stranger, and the two walked slowly down Broadway to the hotel.

"It is early yet for dinner, so come up to my room," said the old gentleman, and he led the way to a pleasant room fronting the street.

"Now tell me about the murder, sir, please, and I'll write it out to put with the dagger."

The man appeared nervous, walking to and fro and glaring out upon Madison Square, as though anxious to keep his face hidden from his companion.

"Well, sir," he said. "I can only give you the story as I heard it."

"It seems Carson Kenedy was a stranger in town, and had here a friend who had come from his part of the country in Pennsylvania."

"They did not room together, but were frequent visitors, one to the other, and where Kenedy was poor, Brown was rich, and frequently let the former have money."

"Did you know them?"

"Yes; for I then clerked in the store where Luke Brown was cashier, and I often met Kenedy there when he came to see his friend; but, to my story, for I wish to get it off my mind."

"It seems that Kenedy got into bad company, began to drink and gamble, and, being also cash-

ier of the firm he worked for, he began to draw on money not his own.

"He came to the store one day, and all our clerks saw that he was very ugly about something, and he went out with a threat, but against whom we did not hear."

"That night, after the store was closed, Luke Brown received an Express package containing several thousand dollars in bills, and he receipted for it, put the money in his pocket and went home."

He was never seen alive again, for, some parties going up about midnight to his rooms found him dead, and that dagger was on the floor, all blood-stained, showing how he was killed.

"His money was gone, his jewelry and all, and a handkerchief belonging to Carson Kenedy and stained with blood was found upon the floor."

"Nor was this all, for the dagger was known to be the property of Kenedy, and a threatening letter from him was found, telling Brown that he must have two thousand dollars from him early the next morning, as he had lost the firm's money by speculation, and that if he did not give it to him he would divulge some secret he held of his, and which would ruin him."

"With this evidence, of course, it was known that Carson Kenedy had killed his friend and robbed him, and he was arrested at his rooms, where he was found walking up and down like a madman."

He had changed his clothes, it seems, and the money and jewelry of Luke Brown was not found upon him.

"Still, no more proof was wanted, and he was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged."

"Did he admit his guilt?"

"No, indeed, and died protesting his innocence, for hang he did; but you must pardon me from speaking more upon the subject, as it is most painful to me, both having been my friends."

"You naturally feel badly, sir; but let us go down to dinner now, and then, as I wish to go down-town to see a party whom I wish to get some money from, I will ask you to accompany me, as it is a large sum and I am a little afraid of bunco men and garroters in New York."

"Certainly I'll go with you with pleasure," and an hour after the two drove away from the Hoffman House in a carriage, which drew up in the very worst quarter of the city.

"What! is there any one living here who owes you money?" cried the young man.

"Yes, my friend, you owe something to justice, and you are my prisoner."

"Resist and you are a dead man!" was the startling response of the old man, and a revolver gleamed in the frightened face of the one he had decoyed into his clutches.

CHAPTER XL.

A FORCED CONFESSION.

AGAIN does the scene change to the dismal vault where the Queen of the Crooks took the solemn oath, which her love for her unworthy husband made her break.

It is the underground court-room of the Goddess of Justice.

"The Goddess" is seated upon her throne, or in the chair of justice, and about her are the same gloomy surroundings as before.

The masked jury of twelve are in their place, the Recorder is at his desk, the walls are lined with the silent spectators.

Soon the sound of a clanking chain is heard.

Louder and louder it grows, steps are heard approaching, and soon there appears in sight a slow-moving body of men.

There are five of them, four in long black robes, the fifth is in ordinary attire, and he is none other than the young man whose eye had been caught by the unique dagger in the window of the Lindo Brothers' jewelry store.

He was white-faced, trembling, and in vain tried to control his nerves.

"Give the prisoner a seat," said the Goddess of Justice, and a chair was placed for him into which he sunk with a groan.

"Prisoner, your name is Hawley Carter?" said the deep voice of the Recorder.

"It is," he answered.

"Your case is well-known, it has been brought before the jury, and they have decided upon your guilt, but the Goddess of Justice awaits to hear what you have to say before she passes sentence upon you."

"Yes, I await your confession," said the Goddess of Justice.

"My God! is there no escape for me?" cried the frightened wretch.

"None."

"What will be done with me?"

"That depends upon your confession."

"Promise not to hang me and I will confess all," he groaned.

"Your very words are a confession of guilt, a confession that your crime merits punishment upon the gallows," sternly said the Goddess.

"I admit it! Oh, I admit all. I am guilty, but have mercy upon me!" he fairly groaned, dropping upon his knees before the Goddess, and then shrinking back with a cry of terror as he beheld the grinning skull beneath her feet.

"I await your confession, Hawley Carter."

"It shall be soon made," he said, more calmly.

"It was I that got poor Carson Kenedy into his financial troubles, and I that made trouble between the two friends, he and Luke Brown."

"I left the office with Brown and saw him get the money by express, and as I owed largely, I was tempted to get it from him."

"I wrote the letter, forging Kenedy's writing and signature, demanding money of Luke Brown, and making threats."

"I did this after the deed was done."

"I went to Brown's rooms; he was lying on the bed, reading and smoking, and I tried to borrow the money of him."

"He refused me, and I was mad, seized Kenedy's dagger, lying on the bureau, and drove it to his heart."

"I then wrote the compromising letter, and a handkerchief of his, which I had picked up in the office, I left there, stained with blood."

"The money I took, and the jewelry, and the latter I now have, for I dared not dispose of them."

"Carson Kenedy had taken his employer's money to help me out of trouble some time before, and he could not return it, and that nearly crazed him, and went against him at the trial."

"I was not suspected, and he was hanged."

"So you have committed two murders, for you allowed an innocent man to hang?"

"Yes," he gasped.

"I have heard your confession, and I sentence you to be given over to the officers of the law, that Justice, erring against poor Kenedy, may decide your destiny."

"Guards, remove the prisoner, and may Heaven have mercy upon his doubly-guilty soul," and the Goddess spoke in a voice full of emotion.

With a cry of agony the wretch fell upon the stone floor; but was quickly raised up in the arms of the guard and carried out of the gloomy vault.

Half an hour after he was led out of a house and placed in a carriage that waited before the door.

Two men were with him, and he was ironed hands and feet.

Away rolled the carriage toward the upper part of the city, and after a long drive it drew up before the door of a church upon a fashionable cross-town street.

It was night, and growing late, so that few persons were abroad.

Dismounting from the vehicle, one of the men moved off rapidly, while the other got out and stood upon the corner near, leaving the prisoner in the carriage.

Ascending to the door of a handsome house the man who had walked away rung the bell, and made the inquiry of the servant:

"Is Captain Gordon here?"

"Yes, sir."

"And lawyer Rogers?"

"He is in, sir."

"Please give to Captain Gordon this letter."

"Any answer?"

"None," and the man turned away, while the servant entered the library where sat Chief Gordon, spending the evening with his friend and attorney.

"For me? Why, who knew I was here?" he said, taking the letter.

"Ha! The Wizard again!" he cried.

"Out with it, Gordon," said lawyer Rogers, with interest.

The letter was opened, and hastily Gordon read:

"DEAR SIR:—You will find a carriage awaiting you at the door of the Church on West —th street."

"In it is a prisoner in irons, and the driver has orders to await your coming."

"The prisoner is one Hawley Carter, a poor wretch who was guilty of double murder, for he killed a man for money, plotted to have his friend suspected, and then allowed him to hang."

"The slain man was Luke Brown; the one whom Justice murdered, on circumstantial evidence, was Carson Kenedy, hanged in September last."

"The man was suspected by me, dogged, entrapped and confessed his crime, and now I place him in your hands for safe keeping and justice, that poor, unfortunate Carson Kenedy may be proven innocent."

"Expect other developments soon, of the mistakes of justice, the crimes of circumstantial evidence."

"With respect, and regards to lawyer Rogers,"

"Your obedient servant,"

"IVAN, THE INVISIBLE."

"Well!" exclaimed Chief Gordon.

And the two men sat looking at each other in silence.

"Thank Heaven I was not the prosecuting attorney that sent poor Kenedy to the gallows!" said lawyer Rogers.

"No; it is not a pleasant thing to have with one's conscience, and it will hit the judge, also, and the jury hard; but I must go after this prisoner."

"Will you accompany me?"

"Yes."

And they soon after left the house, walked the couple of squares to the church named and beheld the waiting carriage.

The driver sat on his box, and no one else was visible.

"Driver, have you a prisoner inside?" asked Gordon.

"Yes, sir."

Gordon looked in and asked:

"Who are you, my man?"

"Hawley Carter."

"You are my man, so we will ride with you."

"Driver, who else came with you?"

"Two gentlemen, sir."

"Who are they?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Where did you pick them up?"

"A messenger came to the stable for a carriage, sir, and told me to drive to Pearl street and Beekman, and there I found the party, and they ordered me to come here and you would come to me."

"All right; drive to the Tombs."

And half an hour after Hawley Carter found himself in the very cell in which his victim had written on the wall the confession of his innocence, and the entreaty to hunt down the real murderer of the man for whose death he had been hanged.

CHAPTER XL.

THE WIZARD'S INVITATION.

In spite of all the good detective work Chief Gordon and his men were doing on various cases and winning fame as crack Secret Service men, there was one mystery they could not solve, one prisoner they could not capture.

The mystery was as to who and what was the one who signed himself Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective.

The prisoner was the fugitive murderer of the unknown girl who had given his name as Percy Gray.

Invaluable had been the services rendered by the Wizard Detective and his allies, and yet the foundation of their knowledge and the cause of their secret work could not be gotten at.

Thrown constantly together, neither Chief Gordon nor lawyer Rogers could arrive at a solution, and they were wont to talk it over time and again.

The surrender of Hawley Carter to Gordon had resulted in the double murderer making a full confession of his crimes and telling just how he had been accosted by an old man in front of Lindo Brothers' window, whither he was drawn by the sight of the fatal dagger.

He told of the clever plot to worm his confidence from him, the drive to see a person who owed him money and his capture.

Then he made known how he had been put in irons, blindfolded, carried into some house and there left, in pleasant quarters, for several days.

He had been well cared for, but escape was utterly impossible.

Next he had been blinded with a sightless mask and led to the chamber of justice, and a woman had pronounced his sentence.

Who this woman was he knew not, any more than he did those about her gloomy court.

This had Hawley Carter told, and then, with the plea of guilty, he knew that he must accept his doom, and he went to his cell to await his fate, and, in his despair, took his own life.

The story of the underground court had given both the lawyer and the chief something to think over, and they came to the private opinion that whoever the Wizard Detective might be, he had his private hall of justice, police force, Secret Service men, jury and the goddess of justice herself to preside.

Where this underground court was situated Hawley Carter could give no description, as he said, after having been put in irons, he was blindfolded, and driven some distance.

Captain Hester also tried hard to work up the case, but with no better success than Chief Gordon, and his best-formed plans went sadly awry.

One afternoon, in his mail, Bonhill Rogers received a letter that seemed to interest him deeply, for he pondered over it a great deal.

At last he touched his bell, and his office-boy appearing he said:

"Send a messenger at once for Chief Gordon and have him bring Detectives Sam Clapp and Ferret with him."

"Also send another messenger for Captain Hester, and say that I desire to have him come here at once, and to bring with him Officers Michael Kane and Charles Phillips."

The boy wrote the names down, and departed on his errand, and the lawyer turned to write a telegram to Miss Delia Howard, his fair client, telling her that important business would prevent his coming up that evening.

"I hate to miss an engagement with the dear little woman, for somehow I've learned to love her, and she's twined herself all around my heart," he said, half aloud, and the lawyer opened a drawer, took out a photograph of the young lady in question, and gazed at it most fondly, for even attorneys have their attacks of sentiment at times.

In little more than an hour's time Chief Gordon and Captain Hester appeared, meeting at the office at the same moment.

"Where are your men?" asked the lawyer.

"Mine will arrive within the next hour," said the chief.

"And mine also will be delayed as long, as both were on duty and I had to send others to relieve them," Captain Hester responded.

"The Wizard again?" asked Gordon, with a laugh.

"Yes."

"I thought as much," muttered Captain Hester.

"Gentlemen, I've got a little business on hand that will test your nerves," said the lawyer, with a smile.

"Out with it," said the police captain, sententiously.

"I have here a letter which was put in the wrong box, and thus delayed a few hours; but we have time yet."

"It is an invitation from the Wizard."

"An invitation?" both men queried together.

"Yes, to us."

"Which of us?"

"You, Captain Hester, Gordon, myself, Sam Clapp, Ferret, and Officers Phillips and Kane."

"A lively party it must be that needs the attendance of us all," said Captain Hester.

"The Wizard says," reading the letter:

"I wish you and those I have named to take carriages that I will have at your office at six o'clock, and drive to my quarters, for it is my intention to let you into a secret of deep interest to myself, and I believe will be also to you all."

"I select Captains Gordon and Hester, and their men named, because I know their worth."

"I shall do nothing underhand, and you must implicitly trust the guide who will meet you at my door."

"Anticipating the pleasure of meeting you tonight, as your host."

"I remain yet awhile."

"IVAN, THE INVISIBLE."

"I'll go," said Gordon.

"And I also," added Captain Hester.

"Then it is settled, and when the men come we will start, for the carriages will doubtless be on time."

Soon after Sam Clapp dropped in, then officers Phillips and Kane followed, and last came Ferret.

As he entered the office darkness was settling upon the city, and a few moments after two carriages rolled up to the door.

Locking up his office, the lawyer descended the steps followed by the others, and getting into the vehicles they were whirled away through the lighted streets at a swift pace, and their destination appeared to be somewhere in the Five Points.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE SECRET OF THE CELLS.

As the two carriages came to a halt, the occupants saw that it was in a part of the city that was by no means a desirable residence.

They were before an old brick house, painted yellow, that seemed to be occupied, for lights were visible through the blinds.

As they got out the door of the house opened and a man stepped toward the party, raising his hat politely and saying:

"I am glad to see you, gentlemen."

"Please come in."

They entered a wide hallway, for the house was one of the old style with roomy proportions, and they were ushered into a neatly-furnished parlor.

Then all took a look at the one who had welcomed them.

He was unknown to all of them, but was a man of prepossessing appearance, gentlemanly in his manners, and might be taken for a well-to-do lawyer.

"Gentlemen, pray follow me, and you will soon know the cause of your coming," he said.

"Are you the Wizard Detective, may I ask?" lawyer Rogers said.

"I am not, sir," and he led the way through a back parlor, raised a curtain over what appeared to be a window, and a door opened.

Through it they passed into a narrow corridor, where stood a man in a black gown, bearing a lantern.

He preceded the party for quite a distance, and then they came to another door, which opening, as if by the touch of a magic wand, revealed a large hallway with several doors opening into it.

One of them was thrown open, and down a pair of stairs the party went.

Thus they continued following their guide, along corridors, through doorways, down stairways, until they came to a halt in a damp, wretched tunnel-way.

"Gentlemen, you are far down under the street now, and let me say that this was a ravine once, over which an old house was built, and to but one person was the secret known until a few months ago, and he has lived here for long years," said the guide.

A heavy curtain was then drawn back and the party found themselves in the Hall of Justice.

The black-robed spectators, the masked jury, the Recorder were all there, and an exclamation broke from the lips of both Chief Gordon and lawyer Rogers as their eyes fell upon the occupant of the chair of justice.

"The Goddess!" cried the lawyer.

"By all that's holy it is!" whispered the chief.

Men of nerve, brave, splendid fellows, accustomed to peril and strange scenes all were impressed with the surroundings, and in silence walked to the seats that the Recorder arose and motioned them to take, for their guide had now disappeared.

The Goddess did not appear to notice their entrance, but now said:

"Let the prisoner be brought in!"

Then followed the tramp of feet without, the curtain was drawn back and four men entered, bearing a litter upon which lay a man's form. The eyes of the wondering visitors were turned upon the one on the bier, and there were those who started at what they saw.

"Percy Gray, the murderer," said Captain Hester in a low voice.

"Yes, and he seems to be dying," answered Gordon.

"Yes, it is Percy Gray," the lawyer whispered, gazing fixedly upon the handsome face, now pinched with suffering, and already nearing the seal of death.

"Let all here know that this man is dying, from a pistol-wound, self-inflicted several days ago."

"Feeling that his death is near he has made a confession, and that confession the Recorder will read, and, if untrue in the slightest word, you, sir, who are upon the threshold of the grave must speak."

The Goddess spoke in a perfectly distinct voice, and a dead silence followed.

"Do you wish your confession read?" asked the Goddess.

"I do," came in a firm voice.

Then the Recorder read aloud, from a paper before him.

"I, Percy Gray, being at the brink of the grave, from a suicidal act, committed because I was tired of life, and to escape the gallows for a crime committed, do hereby state that my story here told is true in every word, so help me God."

"Where I was born I do not know, nor who were my parents; but I was reared by a Texan ranchero, who found me in an Indian village, a child of four years of age, and took me to his home."

"Tenderly he cared for me, and although I had plainly told him my own name when he found me, but could remember little else about myself, he gave me his own name when he died, and left me his fortune."

"With ample means at my command, I went often to the cities from my ranch, lived a fast, dissolute life, and in the heat of passion took the life of a sheriff who would have arrested me."

"I knew the consequences of my act would be to die on the gallows, and fled, taking the steamer that was sailing for Havana."

"For unluckily I had sold a herd of cattle, and had a large sum of money with me, and determined to be considered dead, I saw a chance to be so believed, for the steamer was passing near a small vessel that lay becalmed, and I slipped into my state-room, left a note saying that my crime haunted me, and I ended my own life."

"Then I slipped overboard into the sea, and, a superb swimmer, struck out for the becalmed vessel."

"It was a long swim, but I made it, and I told the crew that I had been wrecked several nights before and was drifting about upon a spar, when seeing their vessel I left my support and swam to them."

"I also told them that I was an American, who had been in business in South America, and they cared for me most kindly, and took me with them to Key West, whither they were bound."

"From Key West I took a steamer for Boston, and thence to Europe, where I passed a year, devoting myself to gambling."

"Knowing that I was believed dead, for the steamer's captain had so reported me and shown my note, I decided to return to the United States, and at the same time desert my wife, whom I had met going over upon the steamship."

"She was a Boston girl, very beautiful, accomplished and rich, and I won her love and persuaded her to elope with me, and we were married in Paris."

"But her father cast her off, and she was so insanely jealous that I grew to fear her, so I deserted her, and sailed for America."

"I met on my way back to America on the steamer a young New York lady."

"I had changed my name, and professed to be a ranchero from Colorado, and very rich, and I won favor in the eyes of her parents as well as herself."

"She was a lovely girl, and I ascertained from those who knew her an heiress to a large fortune in her own right, so I determined to make her my wife."

"I took rooms in New York at a quiet hotel, and devoted myself to her, and soon we became engaged."

"One night, as I left her home at a late hour, I was startled to suddenly see a woman approach me, whom I recognized as Pauline Gaston, the wife I had deserted."

"She held in her hand a dirk-knife, which I recognized as my own, and she said, fiercely:

"I have tracked you, and I know you intend to wed another, and you shall die!"

"I caught the blade in my arm, thus saving a life I have since wished she had taken and seizing it, I, in a moment of frenzy, drove it to her heart."

"She fell, and haunted by my crimes, I walked out in Central Park the other night, drew my pistol, placed the muzzle over my heart and fired."

"The bullet glanced, but its work, though slow, is sure."

"I was picked up by one whom now I know was dogging my steps, his carriage was near, and he brought me here."

"This is all I have to tell—this story of an aimless, crime stained life."

(Signed)

"PERCY GRAY."

"You acknowledge this confession, Percy Gray?" asked the Goddess.

"I do,"

"Bear him back to his room and let him die in peace," the Goddess ordered.

"One moment! Is that man really wounded and dying, or is this a trick by which he hopes to escape the gallows?"

And Sam Clapp arose and addressed the Goddess.

"You are at liberty to see, sir," the Goddess returned.

Chief Gordon and Captain Hester stepped forward, made a short examination, and the former said:

"There is no deception here; let him die in peace."

"Heaven be merciful to him," fervently said Captain Hester, and in a number of voices, in which the Goddess joined, came an earnest—

"Amen!"

The wounded man was then borne off by the four guards, the guide reappeared accompanied by the man with the lantern, and the Goddess said:

"Gentlemen, I will join you soon in the parlor."

The visitors bowed and followed the guide, and, after a most devious course, they suddenly found themselves in the hallway of the Haunted Rookery.

Here the guide bowed and withdrew, and the same servant in livery who had before admitted the chief and his party ushered them up-stairs into the brilliantly-lighted parlors, and through the open doors the dining-room was visible with the table spread for supper.

"This is most remarkable," said Captain Hester.

"I can't make it all out," the chief responded.

And Bonhill Rogers was about to speak, when suddenly into the room walked a man whose presence brought them all to their feet.

"Percy Gray!"

The name was upon the lip of each visitor, and they stared at him as upon one who had risen from the dead.

He bowed in a courtly way, his smile displaying his handsome teeth, and he said in a voice that was strangely musical:

"Gentlemen, I observe you see in me the Texan ranchero who murdered the sheriff, pretended suicide, fled to Europe under the name of Paul Gaston, married the poor girl Pauline, deserted her, intended marrying another, but was prevented by my wife, whom I killed, and, being arrested, escaped by tricking lawyer Bonhill there, and at last, driven to desperation by remorse, shot myself in Central Park and was brought here, where I confessed my crimes."

"Gentlemen, I am only partly guilty, for I was arrested as the murderer of Pauline Gaston, escaped by tricking Mr. Rogers, and that is all that can be laid against me, for he who committed those crimes is my twin brother!"

CHAPTER XLII.

FALSE FACES.

THE silence that followed the words of the speaker, was such as hovers about the chamber of death.

The visitors drew a long breath of relief, and then the man before them resumed:

"Gentlemen, I was born in Tennessee, and the one whose confession you heard was my twin brother."

"Our parents moved to Texas, my father intending to go into the cattle business there; but on the way our train was attacked by Indians, many of our slaves were slain, and, as we supposed, my brother was killed, so my mother insisted upon returning to the old home, and my father yielded."

"My brother's name was Purdy Gray, mine Percy, and when he was taken from the Indian camp by the kind ranchero, in his childish way he could not tell his name distinctly, and it was believed to be Percy Gray, and so written in the Texan's Bible."

"Having no children of his own he gave my brother his fortune and his name, that of Paul Garnet, and by that he was known."

"As my mother grieved so my father took her abroad, and we traveled there for years, and she died in Germany."

"Leaving me at Heidelberg to finish my education, my father returned to America, to find that in his mountain farm he had a vast fortune, for they were discovered to be coal mines."

"After completing my education I returned home, and having vast wealth at my disposal, traveled for several years, when the death of my father called me back to Tennessee."

"Having a great desire to become a Texan ranchero I went to that State and started a ranch, buying large herds of cattle."

"Then it was that I heard of my brother not having been killed by the Indians, and the fate he eventually met, for he was supposed to have jumped overboard at sea."

"The gentleman who told me of my brother, and who knew all the circumstances, gave me a gold pencil that poor Purdy had given to him, and I greatly prized it, and, you may remember, Mr. Rogers, I got it at your house one night."

"Some months ago I came on to New York to arrange some business matters, and you were pointed out to me, Mr. Rogers, as a good lawyer to consult, and I was struck with our resemblance to each other."

"That night I visited at the address of an old Tennessee friend, and finding that the family had gone abroad I attended the theater and was going to my hotel when I heard a cry and stopped to listen."

"It was in a woman's voice, and as it was not repeated I walked on to suddenly come upon the form of Pauline Gaston lying upon the pavement."

"I raised her up, a policeman appeared, others were called, she opened her eyes, and believing me to be my brother, with her dying words accused me of being her murderer."

"You know the rest, gentlemen, regarding my arrest and incarceration."

"But you do not know that, while in my cell, I read on the wall lines written there by Carson Kenedy."

"I believed him, and felt that I too might be hanged, so I determined to escape."

"I thought of you, Mr. Rogers, and our resemblance, and you know how well I used it."

"I saw, after my escape, that my name had not appeared in print, and so I felt that those knowing me would know nothing of the accusation against me."

"I am rich, gentlemen, very rich I may say, and I determined to form a Secret Service bureau of my own, to help the innocent, punish the guilty, and to hunt up the murderer of Carson Kenedy."

"I disguised myself, sought out this old rookery, leased it, bought a house on the other street, cut a way through the wall, and made of this a palace, as you see."

"The old man of whom I bought the other house told me of the vast underground space he had, which no one knew of, and I utilized it."

"I got about me characters of all kinds, low and high, and mostly criminals, escaped convicts and men and women guilty of no crimes."

"I made detectives of them, forcing them to take fearful oaths, paying all liberally, and promising pardons to the guilty if they served me well."

"I engaged detectives in other cities, and thus had my network complete."

"Not one has proven false, and the good work I have done you, I think, will vouch for."

"I have a talent for detective work, and took the greatest interest in all I did, and I accomplished my ends in my own way."

"Some weeks ago I saw my brother who returned from abroad."

"I was startled, dogged him, and at last discovered that he was my brother, and not dead as all supposed."

"I drove after him one night, as he left his hotel, followed him to the Park, and was about to speak to him, when he shot himself, and I brought him here, and he is dying, poor misguided man that he is; but he will escape the gallows, thank God!"

"To show you how thorough my system of secret work has been, I wish to tell you that I have a score of disguises in which I defy detection."

"For instance, Mr. Rogers, the man in livery who called upon you, the old man with white locks of whom you have heard, the old lady who put the Vertner case in your hands, the pretended priest who fooled you, Captain Hester, and rescued my little girl-spy, the old man who rented this Haunted Rookery of Mr. J. C. Clinton, the agent, and last, and my best disguise of all, that in which I am known as the Goddess of Justice."

"You look surprised, but I am of slight stature, my features are womanly, and paint, a blonde wig, and ladies' attire, added to the talent of a ventriloquist, which gives me the power to imitate any voice, make a wonderful change."

"As the Goddess only all my band know me, and believe me their leader, with several exceptions that I was compelled to take into my confidence."

"They know that I assume disguises, but have believed me a woman, living here with my old parents, and I have appeared to none as I am, for the large reward I am honored by having on my head would tempt many, and I cared to take no more risks than were necessary."

"I worked up the Vertner case, and sent a splendid man to Paris, and you know how well he served you, Detective Clapp, and aided Mrs. Vassar?"

"I do, indeed," heartily said Sam Clapp.

"I tracked the counterfeiters for you, rescued that poor woman and tried to save her, saved Miss Howard from the asylum, and again from being assassinated, run to earth Hawley Carter, the murderer of Luke Brown, for whose murder poor Carson Kenedy died, and have proved myself innocent of the charge against me."

"I got me skeleton keys, bribed one of your men, Captain Hester, to open your safe and get me that jewelry, and he is now in prison as one who aided Ella Leslie to rescue her husband."

"I entered your office at will, Chief Gordon, and your home, Mr. Rogers, with my keys,

bribed a post-office clerk to give me the letter whose disappearance you could not account for and which contained the pardon for the engraver, now one of my best men, and I have done good, saved many from robbery and harm, and redeemed many people from sinful lives, and whom I wish now to turn over to you as skilled Secret Service people, and gain pardon for those who have broken the laws, but deserve mercy for their good acts since."

"Now, gentlemen, let me ask you to join me at supper, and then I will seek the side of my dying brother, and, when he is dead, my entire Secret Service machinery I place in your hands, while this old rookery can be sold out, and the proceeds given to the poor of the neighborhood, as a last gift of the Goddess."

"And you, Mr. Rogers, I would ask to take the money my unfortunate brother leaves, and place with it a handsome monument over the grave of the Unknown that was, now known to have been his wife, and over whom I erected a small shaft as a sympathetic souvenir."

"Gladly will I do so, sir," said the lawyer.

"And then notify her family of her death, for he has given me her address, and send to them the jewelry she had on when she died."

"It shall be attended to, Mr. Gray," said Bonhill Rogers, earnestly, and the party went in to supper, and greatly enjoyed the delicious repast, although they were partly dazed, one and all of them, at the strange solution of the secrets of the cells which they had heard.

CONCLUSION.

PURDY GRAY, the unfortunate, died the day following the reading of his confession, in the underground Chamber of Justice, and he was buried by his brother in Greenwood, and over his grave was placed a broken marble shaft, upon which no word was carved, no name given, for it was better so.

After the burial, the Secret Service corps were transferred to the different forces in the city, and pardons were given to those who deserved them, while the furniture of the Haunted Rookery was sold, the proceeds given to the poor, and the denizens of that quarter wondered what had become of the generous lady, the Goddess of the Five Points.

From his palatial home in the Rookery, Percy Gray moved to an up-town hotel, and it was his intention to return to Texas, but he was persuaded to remain a few weeks to be "best man" at Bonhill Rogers's marriage with the fair "Angel of Eden," as the young lawyer called his beautiful lady-love whom he had first met in an asylum.

Verdnon Maurice, who had purchased a grand home near Eden Manor, with his wife and Mrs. Vassar, were there, and other guests were Chief Gordon, Captain Hester, Sam Clapp, and Ferret.

It was a quiet wedding, but greatly enjoyed by all, and the lion of the evening was Percy Gray, the daring man who had revealed the secrets of many cells, and had done so much good for his fellow-creatures under the strange title of Invisible Ivan, the Wizard Detective.

THE END.

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